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Cucumber Chronicles

J. Ashby-Sterry

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THE BEQUEST OF

EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
(CLASS OF 1882)

OF NEW YORK

1918

Saint Martins Chambers. Trafalgar Square 9th December. 1889

My dear Lambourne

I was away & should have answered yours at once. There was not clear where to find you, so I hunted for you unsuccessfully at the Garrick & Beefsteak Friday & Saturday. With regard to the Caricaturists I had so much difficulty in getting information & it took so much time, that I was unable to pursue the matter further & I cabled to Jerusalem saying I could not undertake it. Give me a hail when you happen to be in town & I shall be very glad to see you.

Believe me, to be,

Yours very truly,

J. Astley Stern.

From a Photograph by H. W. Taunt & Co.

HOGARTH'S HOUSE.

(*See Page 53.*)

MBER CHRONICLES

E TO BE TAKEN IN SLICES

BY

J. ASHBY-STERRY

New York
SCRIBNER AND WELFORD
1887

From a Photograph by H. W. Taunt & Co.

HOGARTH'S HOUSE.

(*See Page 53.*)

CUCUMBER. CHRONICLES

A BOOK TO BE TAKEN IN SLICES

BY

J. ASHBY-STERRY

AUTHOR OF "THE LAZY MINSTREL," "TINY TRAVELS,"
"BOUDOIR BALLADS," "SHUTTLECOCK PAPERS,"
THE SNAILWAY GUIDES,"
ETC., ETC

New York
SCRIBNER AND WELFORD
1887

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FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

TO

HARRY FOSTER

(OF TOLWORTH)

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

BY HIS OLD FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE sky is cloudless, the sun is brilliant. The wind has dropped, the sail flaps idly, there is a faint rustle of the foliage, and a tiny ripple gurgles musically against the stem of the good ship *Shuttlecock*, as I drift lazily down the dear old River. It is one of the finest days we have had this year: it is tremendously hot, and "Cucumber Chronicles" hath to mine ear a refreshing sound. It is suggestive of restful ease, a merry dinner and cool drinks, when I make the pleasant port of Henley at eventide. It even suggests something more. Do I not remember an old friend of my youth, whose delightful adventures have been a source of untold joy to all of us—Captain Lemuel Gulliver? Cannot I recall his visit to a certain Academy and all he saw there? What always impressed me more than anything else was the wild enthusiast who "had been eight years upon a project for extracting sunbeams out of

cucumbers, which were to be put in vials hermetically sealed and let out to warm the air in raw, inclement summers." How long, I wonder, have *I* been trying to extract sunbeams from cucumbers, and many other things even more unlikely? I have no expectation of ever being able "to supply the governor's garden with sunshine at a reasonable rate;" but if, when any of the nineteen vials here collected are opened and the sunshine "let out," there may be found one or two rays that may serve to brighten any of the dull days of our English climate, or make the world less dismal to any one, I shall feel that my faint attempt to emulate the Philosopher of Lagado has not been in vain.

J. ASHBY-STERRY.

On board the *Shuttlecock*, off Bolney Ferry.
September.

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CUCUMBER CHRONICLES.

IN SEARCH OF A GIANT.

THE scene is the "Horse and Groom" inn at Polegate, the period is yesterday, and the weather is perfect. I am thinking of going for a stroll to Wilmington, and round and about that neighbourhood. The question is whether I had better not remain where I am. If I were to stay in this comfortable old commercial inn—low-ceilinged, panelled, and snug—I daresay they would furnish me with a pen and ink, and I might be able to write about Wilmington as well as if I went there. The worst of going to see a place is, you are always trammelled by facts; and facts often seriously interfere with the flow and fancy of one's pen.

Is it not on record concerning important news coming from abroad on a certain ship to a sea-port town? And when the ship was expected an army of special correspondents congregated on the shore, they chartered private steamers, they bribed fishermen, they passed their days in gazing through tele-

scopes, and their nights in sitting up awaiting the advent of the wished-for vessel. When at last she arrived, in the middle of the night, they rushed forth with one accord; they boarded the ship, and they fought madly for precedence on its deck. But there was one special—I may call him the Extra-special—who went not out. He slumbered serenely in his four-poster. And when morning was come, and he awoke much refreshed with his sweet repose, he sat him down, and he wrote a few columns stating the reasons he did not go out, full of graphic power, quiet humour, and quaint suggestion. This account was, I am told, far better worth reading than the array of hard, dry facts which his brethren had gathered together at so much personal inconvenience.

When in doubt, remain where you are. Capital rule! I should like very much to imitate the example of the Extra-special above alluded to, but I fear, without the extraordinary powers of the aforesaid gentleman, my efforts would prove a failure. Besides, the weather is too lovely to remain indoors. If it were pouring with rain, or blowing circular saws, bradawls and gimlets—as it usually does in this climate—I might alter my determination; but this glorious sunshine positively compels one to go out, and, notwithstanding the disadvantage of being trammelled by facts, I determine to risk it.

The commencement of my walk is not particularly interesting. It is a long bit of straight road running pretty close to the railway. To the left may be seen a superb slope of down. Here I ought to see the celebrated Long Man of Wilmington, a figure with a staff in each hand, cut in the grass. The figure is 240 feet long, and years ago was plainly to be seen from a great distance. It, however, has not been scoured for a long while, and it is only with great difficulty you can find any trace of it. I believe, however, when the light falls at a particular angle it is much more easily discernible. Some reckon this figure to be of the remotest antiquity, others put it down to the monks of Wilmington. I should be inclined to think it was a sly caricaturist of the Fifteenth Century who was anxious to hold up to ridicule some unpopular personage. What a wide field—literally a wide field—for caricature would the South Downs afford. How cartoonists would revel in such a boundless space. Fancy Mr. John Tenniel, Mr. Pellegrini, Mr. William Boucher, Mr. Gordon Thomson Mr. Leslie Ward, Mr. John Proctor, and Mr. Alfred Bryan depicting popular or unpopular members on their own hill-side, so that they might be always visible to their constituents. The "Long Man," however, ought certainly to be scoured without delay, or he will be lost sight of altogether. This is an age of athletics and superfluous energy.

Why do not some of our youths form themselves into a committee and work off their superfluous energy by once more restoring the Wilmington Giant?

I meet but few people on the road. Save a nervous jolted gentleman on a tall bony horse, and a couple of weary men who tell me they have walked all the way from Brighton, I see no one. Stay, I encounter two hideous puffing, snorting, traction-engines. Why are these things allowed to pass along the road at midday? If you are driving a spirited horse, you can never tell what injury may happen to life and limb by encountering one of these monsters. If the driver did not keep a sharp look-out, and happened to make a trifling mistake in the steering, you would be crushed in an instant, without a chance of being saved. I am very much relieved when they have passed; though I try to look as if I were greatly interested in their mechanism. I should very much like to know what toll these machines pay. It ought to be something very substantial, for their enormous weight must cause serious damage to every road they pass over. Now I should like to ask——. But I did not come out here to ask questions. There is a very House of Commons of rooks on my right hand, who have taken up the question of these road engines; they are debating the matter earnestly and noisily, so I will leave it to them.

The road turns sharp off to the left. There are six tow-haired children playing beneath a guide-post. I point straight on and say "Wilmington?" Six heads nod at once. I pause and put up my eyeglass. Six mouths immediately break into the broadest grins I have ever seen in my life. I am afraid their mouths will split, or that they will never be able to get them into serious shape in time for morning service next Sunday. I proceed. Directly my back is turned I hear six shrill little voices combined in one piercing shout. I am very much afraid they are laughing at my eyeglass. Perhaps they are laughing at *me*. Why cannot I "command respect"? A line in the copybook used to say *Punctuality commands respect.* Possibly I am not Punctuality personified. I am quite certain I do not command respect. I know three little girls, who are quite old enough and big enough to know better, who do not treat me with the least respect, but who receive all my grave counsels and wise sayings with shrieks of inconsiderate laughter. As I advance I hear the merry laughter of the tow-haired children still ringing. Probably I am the most amusing thing they have seen in Wilmington for the last year.

The village is little more than one long street. On either side of the way are picturesque little cottages, curious houses, and one or two quaint shops. They are so scattered, however, that I

scarcely realize that I have yet reached my destination, and I ask a stalwart woodman, with a bright glittering axe, not to "spare that tree," but if I am going right for Wilmington. He gazes at me fixedly, and says, "Why, sir, this *is* Wilmington!" I say "Oh, yes," as if I knew all about it; "but where is the church?" He points straight on with his dangerous-looking implement, and I see the tower in the distance, standing out sharply against a grand background of grey down.

I ascend a steep flight of rustic steps up an embankment and find myself in the churchyard. I pass under an enormous yew-tree which is probably four hundred years old. I find the church door open, and I enter. The place is undergoing cleansing and repairs, and the repairs seem to be conducted with good taste and simplicity. There is no leaning, as far as I can see, to the modern abomination of flashy brasswork and encaustic tiles. The church is of the late Norman and early English period, with some traces of later styles. I am told that some of the arches, pillars, and windows are composed of hard chalk. It is of an unusual shape, the north transept being very much larger than the south. Possibly they are going to convert the former into a vestry. Be that as it may, I must emphatically protest against a modern fireplace and mantelpiece which is built in the wall, and entirely out of harmony with the rest

of the structure. There is a good old wooden pulpit, which seems to have been carefully restored.

When I reach the road again I hail a hearty, fresh-coloured youth, who looks as if he might be the young squire or the old squire's son, and ask him my way to Lullington. He smiles blandly and shakes his head, and informs me that he "is a stranger in these parts." How I resent anybody but myself being a stranger in these parts. Whilst I am talking to him, I hear a pleasant voice; I look up and see a merry girl's face peering over the bushes in the garden on the other side of the way. She tells me, I am to keep round to the right and go straight on. I follow her directions and pass by the Priory, now converted into a charming farm-house. There is a carriage waiting for the gate to be opened. Inside is a good-looking, middle-aged gentleman in furs, and a pretty little fair-haired girl. I wonder whether this is the proprietor of the farm. Hardly, I should think: he looks more like a distinguished diplomatist than a Sussex farmer. The entrance gate, with two Fifteenth Century towers, is nearly all that remains of the old Priory nowadays.

After I have passed the Priory I try in vain to discover the outline of the Long Man, but the more I look for it the more it seems to elude my vision. As I get upon higher ground, I have a superb view

across the country. I can see Berwick spire peeping out from its grove of trees; I note the Cuckmere sparkling in the sunshine, as it winds about in the valley beneath; I observe a thin white line of steam, which marks the course of the Brighton and Hastings Railway, and the varied expanse of the rich flat pasture-land beyond it. I presently pass the many-coloured roofs of the little hamlet of Milton Street down below me, and as I reach higher ground behold the church of Saint Andrew Alfriston in the distance. I walk on and on, thinking that I must have made a mistake in the road, and that I shall never reach Lullington at all. But at last I come upon a quaint, grey, ancient lichen-covered little church, standing in the midst of an overgrown graveyard, and commanding a superb view of the Downs and the valley.

I was told I should find this a very small church. It is, indeed, the very smallest I ever saw in my life. When I tell you that Saint Lawrence, in the Isle of Wight, is quite a cathedral in comparison, you may have some idea of its tiny dimensions. I am certain it must be under twenty feet square. I am told that at a pinch it would accommodate forty people. If so, I am quite certain they would be so much pinched that they would not recover their natural shape for a week; for what with the altar, with its almost invisible Decalogue in a quaint frame, surmounted by the royal arms of the time of King

George II., a roomy pulpit, an harmonium, and a very large font, there is very little space for any one. How the musician manages to play the harmonium without sitting on the laps of the congregation, I fail to understand. It is just the place I should like to be married to the girl of my heart in—if there are girls, and I have a heart, in these degenerate days. One could have a real Wemmickarian wedding, because there would be no room for the obtrusive cousins, the stout uncles, and the overbearing aunts, and the rest of those tiresome relations who always make such an occasion a period of self-glorification, new bonnets, and smart frocks. Besides the principals there would only be room for a thin groomsman and a slender, close-skirted bridesmaid. All crinoline or what the milliners call "extra fulness" should be rigidly excluded.

This quaint little Early English structure I found prettily decorated with flowers, and it had the air of being well used and carefully looked after. Service is held here every alternate Sunday, and is generally, I am told, well attended. A story is related of a stranger who, more than fifty years ago, looked in one Sunday morning at this little church. The preacher was a little bit of a man; he took his text from the thirty-fifth verse in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John. There were only twelve people in the con-

gregation, and the offertory amounted to eighteen pence. The visitor remarked, when he paused in the graveyard to take an accurate observation of the exterior of this tiny place of worship, that it was the smallest church, the shortest parson, the briefest text, and the least collection that had ever come within his experience.

It is probably the smallest church in England, and the parish has the smallest population of any in Sussex. In 1811, it was forty-eight; and in 1861 it was sixteen. I should very much doubt if it was much over this at the present time, as Lullington itself seems to be little more than a cluster of farm-buildings and a fine farmhouse, which I believe still belongs to the Woodhams family, who have held it for many generations. With some regret I lock up the door of the quaint little church, I brandish the gigantic key in my hand, and sit down on a broken tombstone outside and rest. I have had a long walk, I am hot and weary, and it is pleasant to sit for awhile and gaze on the magnificent prospect around me, to hear the faint breeze rustling in the branches, to watch the long grass waving o'er the scattered tombs of good parishioners of Lullington long passed away. Lullington! There is something soothing in the very name, I think, as I hear the distant caw of the rook and the lowing of cattle being driven homeward.

It will not do to muse and to meditate, however, for I have a weary walk before me, and it will be dark long before I reach the dinner-table. I deliver up the gigantic key to a good lady who dwells in a pleasant cottage hard by, and take my way down a grassy path into the valley. I cross a bridge over the Cuckmere, I pause for a moment to watch a couple of eager fishermen, then ascend the steps, pass along a walled passage, and find myself in Alfriston. I am by no means sorry to look in at the "Star" and have a chat with good Mrs. Page. I am glad to sit down once more in that picturesque club-room, and have a little light refreshment in the way of some biscuits and cheese and a tankard of prime bitter ale.

Rested, invigorated, and cheered, I am once more on the road again. The air is getting a little bit chilly, but the evening is superb. The lambs are bleating, my old friends the rooks are giving an evening concert. Purple clouds are gradually filling the eastern horizon, intermixed with wild patches of flame colour. And as the shadows are lengthening, and I find myself giving a capital imitation of the Wilmington Giant, as the sward of the Downs becomes a heather-purple, and the chalk a rose colour from the setting sun, I light up my pipe, I step out boldly, and take my way along the road to Berwick, singing a merry song.

TUBBLETON'S.

WHO Tubbleton might be, or why he existed, or what sort of business he carried on it was impossible to say.

He might have carried his heart on his sleeve, but he certainly did not hang his banner on the outward walls. There were no outward and visible signs of the inward occupation or calling of Tubbleton. He did not proclaim his profession from the house-top, nor did he blare his trumpet in the Queen's highway. He might have been a stevedore, a scrivener, or a City Company gone wrong, for aught I knew. He was just as likely to be a millionaire, a benevolent society, a corn-cutter, a gas company, a toy-merchant, a publisher of religious tracts, a liquidator, a notary public, a receiving-house for melancholy mad hatters, a wholesale glover, a disestablished bonded warehouse, an Asylum for Decayed Beadles, or a Society for the Relief of Impecunious Ticket Porters.

All this, however, was the purest speculation on

my part. The many times I had passed through Dimble Lane—the narrow thoroughfare in which Tubbleton's was situate—I never saw a sufficient number of people passing in or out of the house to make me quite sure what business its proprietor carried on. Whatever business Tubbleton transacted, it was certainly done in the most quiet—not to say underhand—fashion, and if he ever took any pleasure, he certainly took it more sadly than even the majority of Englishmen. Dimble Lane, too, was a sad sort of thoroughfare—if it could be called a thoroughfare—when there was nothing either thorough or fair about it. It was a sort of street that never looked you in the face—it was a one-eyed place, too wide for a footway and not wide enough for a road. It had the drawbacks of both and the advantages of neither. The houses all seemed to turn their backs on it and pretended their fronts were elsewhere—I do not believe those houses had any fronts *any*where. They were great in untransparent windows, in corrugated panes, in "blobby" glass—that always made a respectable clerk, who had his desk behind one of them, look like a paralyzed octopus, or a light-hearted anatomical preparation. They were brave in doors, with vast bars, rivets, staples, padlocks, and bolts. From the amount of barring, and bolting, and riveting, and padlocking, and iron-plating, you might fancy Dimble Lane was in some mysterious

manner closely allied with the Bank of England. Dimble Lane was quiet enough for a play-ground; there was seldom any vehicular traffic through it, but it was never patronized by the City children.

I once, in my passage through it, met a child. He could not have been more than five, but he was the oldest child I ever saw. He was wrinkled, he had crows-feet, he had a stoop, he walked with a little stick—I daresay if he had taken off his hat I should have found him bald and grey—he was so old, so grave, so sad. He toddled along, wagging his little head in grave old-mannish fashion. I felt assured that, if I had asked him, he could have told me when the Bank meant to raise the rate of discount; that he could have given me the quotation of Consols, to an eighth, down to that very moment. This baby financier was the indirect cause of my discovering the calling of Tubbleton. He paused before Tubbleton's door, apparently absorbed in some elaborate calculation—I felt certain that infant dreamed of shares and stocks, that his toys were bulls and bears, and that he made nursery rhymes about Twenty Per Cent.—when a brisk, bare-armed, short-aproned barman issued sharply from the door with a covered dish and a foaming pewter pot. In trying to avoid the tiny capitalist the waiter slipped, and half the contents of the pot was spilled. He went back to get it replenished; whilst he had gone I slipped

within the threshold and read, inscribed on the lintel in attenuated characters, that somebody—it was not Tubbleton—was licensed to sell wine, beer, spirits, &c. On the return of the waiter I interviewed him, and found that according to his ideas Tubbleton's was the most respectable, commodious, and desirable hotel within the City of London.

I went on my way pondering. A good old-fashioned City inn I say to myself. One of the very few of the kind left. Plain homely fare, but plenty of it. Old waiters, respectable chambermaids; "boots" is a character, I'll be bound. Capital old port, I've no doubt. Queer little bar-parlour, old glasses, lemons, ancient punch-bowl. Landlord one of the good old sort—member of City Company, I daresay—should not be surprised if he were a Loriner. Don't know what a Loriner is, but it sounds well—The Most Worshipful Company of Loriners. And I daresay he can brew such punch as I have not tasted this many a long day. I am very pleased with all this; and one day, when coming up from the country, I bethink myself of this good old hostelry, and I shout gleefully to the cabman, "Tubbleton's." "Beg pardon," says the driver. "Tubbleton's, Dimble Lane, City." "Where's Dimble Lane, sir? Don't seem to know it." I give him elaborate directions as to how he is to reach it. Delightfully out-of-the-

way place. Unknown to hansom cabmen! Charming! Just one of those sort of places that Charles Dickens would have described. I am in the highest spirits when I clatter along Dimble Lane and finally pull up at Tubbleton's.

I fling the doors of the cab open with a bang, but nobody appears. I cannot find a bell to ring, and I hesitate as to executing a violent fantasia on the Tubbletonian knocker. I look at the cabman; the cabman looks at me. "Werry slow lot here, sir," says he with a grin. I give a faint smile and say it's all right—I'll go in and see. I stride up the staircase, and I am sorry to say that my first impression of the place is its darkness and its stuffyness. It seems as if it were only meant to be used after the gas was lighted. I presently run against a chambermaid, who looks as if she had slept in her clothes and had made her toilet by black-leading her face. I make representations to her about my portmanteau. She says she don't know, but she'll call Stopples. Ah, I think, Stopples is "boots"; I shall have some rare fun out of Stopples—I'll be bound. After a deal of shouting upstairs to Hemly to know where Stopples is, and great anxiety of every one to know whether Stopples has jest stepped out or not, I am given to understand that everything is satisfactorily arranged, and that my baggage has been deposited in Number Forty-five.

I must say I am not struck with the appearance of my bedroom; there is nothing ancient or quaint about it. It has the atmosphere and tone of a shabby second rate lodging-house. I cannot say I am more impressed with the comfort of the coffee-room. I do not see any token of joviality, or the spirit of Mr. Wardle, Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, and John Browdie hovering about it. There is a wan, pinched, spare look about the whole place. I call the waiter, whom I find to be Stopples—a man more totally devoid of character or fun it has never been my lot to encounter—and say I should like to order dinner. This seems to stagger him. He says "Yes, sir," puts the London Directory under his arm, and vanishes. He comes back and says in a sepulchral voice, "Better step this way, sir, and see Mrs. Bunnidge." Mrs. Bunnidge, I find, is the proprietor of Tubbleton's. A mystery within a mystery; and when I arrive at the bar, I come to the conclusion that Mrs. Bunnidge is the most mysterious thing I have yet seen at Tubbleton's. I at once in my mind christen her the Surprised Countess, for there is a courtly air about her, coupled with a generally dishevelled look, somewhat suggestive of the mildewed mind. I should not be at all astonished if she said "Welcome, good sir, to Tubbleton's! Ho! drawer within there. Bring forth a bottle of the best Bur-*gun*-dy, and let the sir-tranger drink me daughter's health."

She, however, did nothing of the kind. She looked colder and grew haughtier, as she sat in a dimly-lighted bar, which looked uncommonly like a ship's cabin. Her face seemed familiar to me. Had I ever seen her as a stewardess between Calais and Dover? She interrupts my meditations by saying in a regal voice, "You want to order dinner!" I apologize, and stammer out excuses, and say I should like to have a little dinner if it is not inconvenient, but will leave it entirely to her. "What would you like?" said the Surprised Countess, getting less surprised and more like a countess every moment. I feebly say anything that may be handy. Being further pressed to indicate my longings, I hint that a little clear soup, a boiled sole and shrimp sauce and some cutlets, a bird and an omelette, will content me. Six o'clock, please, I said, I should like dinner to be on the table. I had to go to the theatre that night, and I thought it would give me plenty of time, also some opportunity of chatting with the jovial old gentlemen whom I fancied might be dining at the same time.

When, at six o'clock to the minute, I entered the room in evening dress, I felt that I made a sensation. Everybody was having tea with a vigour that converted toast-crunching into a gymnastic feat, and tea-swallowing into a difficult department of hydraulics. The gymnastics and the hydraulics ceased for a moment, and there was a

dead silence as I took my seat at the table assigned to me. I was evidently looked upon not only as an interloper, but as a suspicious character. They apparently wondered what I meant by dining at six o'clock in evening dress in a family hotel, when everybody else was having tea. "Waiter," I said, after Stopples had deposited the soup, "wine carte." "Beg pardon, sir, don't think we have any." "Nonsense. List of wines, I mean." Whereupon he produces a list written on a sheet of notepaper. I see among wines, which I trust are harmless, "Hocheimer" and "Hockeemer." I ask Stopples which he recommends. "Well," he says meditatively, "some gents likes Hocheimer and some Hockeemer; it's a matter of taste." And so I found it was—a matter of very bad taste. The soup was a stodgy mock-turtle, the sole and the bird fairly cooked, the cutlets were a failure, and Stopples told me they had sent all the way to Leadenhell Market, but there were "no fresh homlicks left."

I departed somewhat sadly to my theatre; but thinking perhaps I had dined too early, and that I should see plenty of people of the right sort later on. It was half-past eleven when I returned. Tubbleton's already showed symptoms of going to bed. I had to ring several times, and I heard a letting down of chains, an unlocking of doors, and a withdrawal of bolts before I could be

admitted. At last came Stopples, very nearly asleep, and seeing me with a big cigar in full blast in my mouth, said, "You want the smokin'-room, sir." He then conducted me down a long corridor to the most melancholy smoking-room I have ever been in in my life. It was surrounded with an uncomfortable black horsehair divan. There was one candle on the mantelpiece, and there were half-burnt nightlights on the tables. Two dismal men sat on either side of the fireplace, conversing in whispers, and, when I threw in a remark or two, evidently looked upon it as an intrusion. In a dark corner was a very, very old gentleman with white hair and a furrowed face, with sinewy hand and thin legs—the very image of old Chuzzlewit. He was fast asleep, and groaning and snoring in most gruesome fashion. Presently one dismal man looks at the other dismal man, and says, "This won't do, being up at this time. It's Sunday morning." They evidently looked upon the whole proceeding as a debauch of the wildest character.

They got up silently and sadly, without wishing anybody good-night, and I was left alone with Chuzzlewit, who began to moan fearfully and talk in his sleep. I was greatly relieved when Stopples and another attendant came in and awoke the old gentleman. "Time to go to bed," they shouted, for he was as deaf as a post. "All right, all right,"

piped the feeble old man; "don't forget the hot rolls in the morning." "No hot rolls to-morrow," they roared, "it's Sunday!" But the ancient hankerer after buttered bread-stuffs would not be gainsaid, and I heard him crooning all down the corridor, "Don't forget the hot rolls in the morning," over and over again, till I began to be quite nervous, and to fancy that I had got into a private lunatic asylum. The candle on the mantelpiece went out, and the room was only illuminated by the dying nightlights. I am a pretty good hand at sitting up under any circumstances; but this was rather too depressing, so off I strode to bed.

I could not get to sleep, however, for there was an offensive clock that struck the quarters and chimed, and did all sorts of annoying things close to my window. The bed I fancied was damp, and there was somebody with a hideous cough in the next room, who was on the bark all night. I kept on thinking it was my old friend Chuzzlewit in a fit, and once or twice I was on the point of ringing the bell and alarming the house. I got up once, lit a pipe, mixed myself a stiff glass of brandy and water, and tried to think it was a capital adventure, and that I was enjoying myself very much indeed. But it would not do. I heard all the hours, quarters, and chimes through till six o'clock, and then dozed off.

I seemed to have been asleep but two minutes

when I heard bells jangling and wrangling in every possible way, apparently inside my room. My old friend the church was at it again with renewed fury. Very angry indeed it appeared to be. It was furious, and was actually bombarding people into church. I find it is close upon eleven, and directly the bells cease begin to get up. Stopples looks very much shocked when he sees me come down to breakfast about twelve. There is a horrible smell of a family dinner pervading the whole place. If there is one thing that I dislike more than another it is the smell of a family dinner. Stopples tells me they dine at two. Big pie, shoulder of mutton, goose, and all that sort of thing, I'll be bound.

With some difficulty I get a cup of tea and some dry toast. I have a fearful headache, so I beg Stopples to get me a brandy and soda. I am just taking a draught of this, when in come the good people from church, all of them fearfully and wonderfully *endimanchés*. The ladies with such beautiful bonnets that they can scarcely move their heads; the gentlemen with such high shirt-collars and such glossy hats; the little girls in such stiffly starched garments that they can hardly walk; and all of them with a perfect library of gorgeously bound hymn-books and church services. They look upon me, I can see, as an outcast, as the most hardened of sinners—a man who dines at

six o'clock in evening dress, who breakfasts at twelve off a brandy and soda, and does not go to church! I believe they will hold an indignation meeting this afternoon, and if I do not go myself, they will petition the Surprised Countess to turn me out.

Stopples asks me if I shall dine in the evening, and I say I think not. I can no longer stand the haughty demeanour, the crushing respectability, and the supreme virtue of the Tubbletonians. I sneak out! Directly I get round the corner I run to the nearest cab-stand, bowl down to the club, have luncheon, and send out to secure a bed at an hotel where I am well known. The next day I send for my portmanteau and pay my bill. "And all I can say is," to quote Mrs. Brown, "if anybody ever catches me inside Tubbleton's again, they may tell me of it."

A LAZY MORNING.

I HAVE no doubt in my own mind that if any one were to look upon me at this present moment they would say I was very lazy.

It is a lovely morning, and I am by the sea. Two of the very best excuses for laziness, any one in his senses will at once exclaim, and I am inclined to agree with him. I am seated on an ancient, picturesque, weed-covered, wave-washed, weather-beaten, broken-down wooden groyne. It is beclamped with rusty ironwork, it is riveted with gigantic red nuts, and it is bepatched and supported by stalwart struts and timbers. Its very decrepitude, and the frequency with which it has been altered, added to, and refurbished, gives it its principal charm. At the lower end, where it slopes into the sea, it is covered with brown and yellow seaweed, which goes off with a pop when trodden upon, to the intense delight of countless children who are endeavouring to get as near suicide as possible, without drowning themselves, all day long. This is varied by a slippery green

weed, which, by reason of its false foothold, gives assistance to the children in pursuit of self-destruction, and barnacle-covered timbers, which tend considerably towards the rasping and excoriation of youthful knees.

The upper end of the groyne, where I am sitting, is free of weed, it is bleached and sun-dried, and by reason of the irregularity of its timbers, and the way in which they have been repaired, and then suddenly wrenched out of their position, and smacked about by the violence of the waves, you may discover all kinds of comfortable nooks, places sheltered from the wind and quiet corners, quite as easy as your own easy-chair, and where you are not near so likely to be disturbed by callers. Another thing, there are no letter-boxes or door-knockers or bell-pulls on the groyne, so no letters can be delivered. If I caught a postman trying to deliver a letter to me now, on the strength of knowing me by sight, by Saint Martin-le-Grand I would report him to the Postmaster-General; and if one of those young rascals of telegraph-boys arrived with one of those horrible cinnamon-coloured envelopes, I should be seriously inclined to drop him into the sea, telegram and all.

If you want to select a comfortable seat by the sea-shore, just note those that are affected by jovial old ladies who come for a morning's hard novel-reading under an umbrella, and you will not

be far wrong. I observed this place was selected by one of the experienced yesterday, so this morning I came early and secured it, and I find it in every way satisfactory. I have a comfortable back to lean against, I have a rest for my feet, and while I can revel in the glorious sunshine, I am well protected from the wind.

I have brought out with me a favourite author. But I do not read him. I have something better to read in the surrounding scene. Why weary my eyes with commonplace type when I can gaze on the sea as it sparkles in the sunshine, as it changes nd flickers with the cloud-shadows? When I can watch the varieties of silvery grey, the lines of deep purple, the lines of malachite come and go with a ceaseless change and re-change! How can I hope to get on with a story when I find myself compelled to read to a tune? An old friend of mine does not like music at dinner, because he says he always feel obliged to eat to the tune. Reading to a tune is nearly as bad, as one feels compelled to keep time to the ceaseless murmur of the waves on the shingle. This has been compared by some one to the reading of the Psalms by the priest and congregation in some secluded country church. This morning the priest is somewhat feeble, and there is a sparse congregation; but still it would materially interfere with my reading.

I do not like a shingly shore to walk upon, but

for giving you a good clear sea close in-shore, and for its interpretation of the music of the waves in some of its most delicate passages, there is nothing like it. It would perhaps be——. I am suddenly startled by a whine of pleasure, and find a cold nose thrust into my hand. I look up and see it is Dog. Who and what is Dog? you ask. Well, he is an animal of no particular breed. He is something between a second-hand setter and a depraved Newfoundland. He has no owner, no home, and no name: but he is known to everybody as Dog. He is everybody's friend: all the children pull his ears, ride on his back, or smother him with shingle. He is continually running races or swimming for sticks off the end of the groyne. He apparently lives on pebbles, sea-weed, and buns. He is a thin, spare dog, whose coat would probably be silky if it were not for salt, and curly if it had time to dry. He is a Bohemian dog, who never did much good for himself, and sometimes it pleasures him hugely to outrage society. Nothing delights him better than to bring a stick out of the water and place it down in the very midst of a lot of well-dressed little ladies and gentlemen, and then shake himself violently and fling off countless aqueous Catherine Wheels over the entire company. Dog is most indefatigable. Nothing would please him better than to incite me to go and fling my walking-stick into the sea at the present moment. As long as I

would throw it in, he would go in after it. I am quite too lazy, however, for any gymnastics of such a nature this morning.

I look down on my book, the bright sunshine on the white page dazzles my eyes. I look up again. A steamer is passing along in the distance, leaving a long thread of brown smoke on the horizon: a pretty white hulled, lateen-sailed boat is skimming along with the light breeze, the two bathing-machines are down close to the water's edge, Dog has just run off barking with a child's pail and a lot of children after him; there is a group of nurses, babies, and perambulators just below me, there are three brown-faced boatmen smoking short pipes at the windlass, and there is a group of pretty girls pretending to work and read, but really succeeding in doing nothing but chatter, under the shadow of a sailing-boat. This group reminds me strikingly of a sketch by John Leech. Indeed, the whole scene reminds me of a picture by Leech: the bit of shore, the bathing-machines, the babies, the sea, the sky, the girls, and the boatmen are unmistakably Leechesque. And what marvellous colour he always got into his sketches. You could see that his skies were blue, that his girls had rosy cheeks, and that his huntsmen had red-coats—though he only drew in black and white. Those two machines are entirely devoted to ladies—we men go out in a boat

a long distance off, you will see some of us come back with towels presently, we are very proud of those towels—and are pretty well occupied all the morning.

Very few girls look well in bathing costumes, and those who cannot swim look silly. Why they should bob about and indulge in ridiculous antics because they happen to wear tunics and trousers in the water instead of petticoats and jackets on dry land, I find difficult to understand. As the bathers get clothed, you find an increase of ladies with their hair hanging out to dry, and as the morning advances we have quite a competitive exhibition of all hues, lengths, and qualities, which is well worth inspection.

What a peal of laughter! What a scampering along the cliff pathway! What a clambering over the fence! A girl of twelve puts her hand on the top rail and vaults over it as neatly as possible. A light-hearted lot of laughing lasses. They are too big for the nursery and too little for the restrictions of young ladyhood; they enjoy the seaside prodigiously. A merry, romping, short-petticoated, black-stockinged, snowy-frilled crew they are! They are sisters, cousins, friends; they are continually quarrelling and making it up; they play violent games; they clamber about the groyne like boys; they pelt one another, and they fall in the water. A bonny bevy of sunburnt girls. I don't

know one of them personally, but they talk so much that you can soon learn their family history. I learned all their names in five minutes.

> Laughing young lasses in very short clothes,
> Mabel and Connie and Poppy and Rose;
> Racing and romping, all rosy and bonny,
> Rosie and Poppy and Mabel and Connie;
> Winsome young maidens for artist to copy,
> Connie and Rosie and Mabel and Poppy;
> To tell you their surnames I'm really unable,
> Poppy and Connie and Rosie and Mabel!

O yes, I know. Some purist will tell me "clothes" and "Rose" is not a good rhyme. Perhaps not. Did not one Robert Herrick write many years ago,—

> "Then, then, methinks how sweetly flows
> That liquefaction of her clothes?"

What was good enough for Herrick is good enough for me. Besides, it's really too much trouble to dispute about rhymes this morning. The four laughing lasses have been rapturously welcomed by Dog, and the whole crew have madly raced down to the water's edge.

There is, I should mention, one individual who enacts the part of thorn or crumpled rose-leaf on this pleasant shore. It is the Demon Babe! I have a shrewd suspicion that his godfathers and his godmothers did not give him that name. He seems

to be an exceedingly respectable baby, well fed, well dressed, and his parents, I should say, are without doubt in affluent circumstances. His perambulator is magnificent, dark blue picked out with scarlet, brass-work beautifully polished, and the interior well cushioned. It has a nice green awning, too, to prevent His Babyship getting grilled in the sun. But he is always being left about. I wonder he has not been stolen long ago, for the sake of his perambulator. What his nurse does with herself I don't know; she may be in love with one of the boatmen, or the man who works the bathing-machine windlass, or she may go a-bathing herself. Anyhow she disappears. She brings her charge down about ten o'clock, and takes him away again at a quarter to one. Between those times he is very much left about. He does not appear to find the time hang heavy on his hands, for anybody who pleases may shove his carriage about, and leave it in any part of the beach. He does not seem to mind, he rarely cries, but he takes a prodigious lot of notice, and he stares,—ye gods, *how* he stares.

Some one has just left him in front of me, and he is staring hard at me. I am always afraid of being left alone with a child of tender years, but to be left alone with the Demon Babe is something appalling. He waggles his head at me, he is evidently reckoning me up and thinking what a

very bad man I must be. He stares harder, his eyes become lobsterious, like unto those of Major Bagstock. He holds his breath and swells himself out like a ball, he grows red—I'm afraid he is going to have a fit—he gets purple, also like unto Major Bagstock—I wonder whether I ought to shake him up?—and he regards me so fiercely that I feel quite uncomfortable. He is the oddest baby I ever saw, he delights to make the most hideous grimaces; at one time he will wrinkle up his face to look like an ancient monkey, at another he will shake that small head so solemnly that he looks wiser than ever Lord Thurlow did. Further than this terrible staring propensity he does not trouble any one much. Beyond thumping on his leather strap and gurgling in an unknown tongue, he has very little to say. But if you feel rather irritable and nervous, and the Demon Babe is planted suddenly in front of you, and left there and begins to stare, it will undoubtedly give you the jumps.

Dear me! I think I must have dropped off to sleep. I recollect the Demon Babe staring at me. I daresay he mesmerized me. He is gone, at any rate. I must find out who his parents are: they should not allow him to go about mesmerizing people. I find I have dropped my book down on the shingle, and it is a good thing it was not washed away by the sea. The party of pretty girls under

the fishing-boat are looking at their watches and packing up their things previous to starting, the bathing is all finished, and a copper-coloured, rugose old lady is hanging out the costumes to dry. Dog has just shambled by, and looked as if he wanted somebody to ask him to dinner; Mabel, Poppy, and the rest of that crew are scrambling over the railings, instead of going through the gate and up the cliff path in an orderly and decorous fashion, and, save the ceaseless lullaby of the waves on the shingle, our pleasant lounging-ground is well-nigh silent and deserted. I have spent a very delightful lazy morning with a lot of people I do not know. I feel very hungry, and I think I had better go to luncheon.

THE SUPERIOR ANIMAL.

DOCTOR WATTS many years ago, in not very lucid verse, attempted to elevate the Bee. He endeavoured to place that vainglorious and boastful insect on a pyramid of virtue. He depicted it as the most self-denying, the most kindly, the most thrifty, the most well-behaved insect in creation. He so wrote it up—I wonder whether Dr. Watts was a bee-master, and whether he made a large sum of money by the sale of honey?—that the Bee became at once the perfect insect. All children looked up to it as a paragon of excellence, an example of industry, and a model of propriety. I tremble to think what would have been the consequence, years ago, if any child in any well-regulated nursery had boldly denounced the Bee. For many years I believed implicitly in its high qualities. It subsequently stung me. Then I began to question and to doubt.

My doubts led to inquiry, and I eventually found the character of the Bee would not bear investigation. After patient and elaborate research I discovered it to be nothing more nor less than an

entomological humbug, a sham, a delusion, and a snare—indeed, the very Pecksniff of insects. I subsequently published my opinion on this matter at very considerable length, and if it has led to the disestablishment of the Bee in the nurseries of to-day, I own I shall be very glad indeed. The downfall of the Bee led to my losing faith somewhat in Doctor Watts. And I found the more I read in his little volume, the less cause did I find for admiration.

One line therein especially annoyed me. It was the oft-quoted "Let dogs delight to bark and bite, it is their nature to." It is absolutely nothing of the kind. The worthy Doctor, after having overlaid the Bee with flattery, proceeds to libel the dog. Upon my word, this is a little too bad. It is not in the nature of any dog to take a delight in barking or biting. The Doctor depicts the dog as of a vindictive disposition, as being fierce, ill-conditioned, quarrelsome, and badly-behaved. He is nothing of the kind. He is quiet, good-humoured, faithful, and sensible. He is more useful than most men; he is infinitely more ornamental than the majority of mankind; and he is undoubtedly more faithful than woman. He is worthy of imitation in many points.

You often hear it said of a man who has been particularly unsuccessful and miserable—a man who has missed all his opportunities, who has

plunged into vulgar dissipation, who has lost time and health and money—that he "has led the life of a dog." He has, in point of fact, done nothing of the kind. If he had, instead of being miserable and unsuccessful, he would be happy and prosperous. The life of a dog is a good one. It is straightforward, healthy, and governed by the strictest laws of common sense. He eats when he is hungry, he drinks when he is thirsty, and he slumbers when he is sleepy. He has a very high order of intelligence, he has strong reasoning powers, and he can understand what is said to him. I know an instance of a dog understanding three languages—French, English, and Spanish. The only drawback in a dog is that he cannot speak.

I am not sure, however, that this is a drawback. I know I should be delighted if certain men that I wot of were afflicted with dumbness for the rest of their lives. The very tone of some men's voices is enough to set your teeth on edge, and the moment they begin to talk it has the most irritating effect on their audience. I once heard of a man who was blackballed at a club because he had a peculiar rasping voice. And people said it was a very hard case. I myself do not see that it was. Why should nine hundred members be made miserable in their house because one man has a discordant voice? It must be borne in mind that

it is important to be doubly particular on these points in a club. You need not invite a man with a discordant voice to your house unless you like, but if he is once a member of your club, you must endure him and his voice for ever, whether you like it or not.

It strikes me very forcibly that this has nothing whatever to do with the subject I have in hand. What I was about to urge was the immense superiority of the dog over other animals. Now compare him with the horse. I am not sure that I like horses much, and I do not think they care much about me, for they have a knack of flourishing a pair of polished steel shoes in the immediate neighbourhood of my head whenever they can get the chance. The horse requires all the care in the world, it has to be groomed, carefully fed, watched and studied. It is liable to catch cold, it suffers from fright, and is easily injured—a blow that a dog would consider a joke might probably ruin a horse for life—indeed, it is infinitely more trouble and anxiety and a deal more expensive than a live baby. Now the dog takes care of himself. He washes himself, feeds himself, grooms himself; he may fight with other dogs, he may roll over and over in the street, he may be kicked, he may get bruised, but it seldom takes any effect on him. He is always up to time smiling, and ready to go anywhere or do anything at a moment's notice.

I am inclined to think that the dog possesses considerable advantage, too, over man, and there are many canine rules of life that might well be adopted by the human race. The dog is not troubled by changes of fashion, of custom, or of government. His coat is always in fashion; he is never worried by tailors, by hatters, or bootmakers; and whether collars are worn high or low, it is all one to him. He cares not for æstheticism or mashery—fancy an æsthetic dog or a masheric dog!—all the little annoyances, all the punctilio and observances of Society are nothing to him. It is a matter of perfect indifference to him whether the Conservative party is in power or whether the Liberals hold the reins of Government. It is all one to him whether Shakespeare or burlesque is popular; and he would be equally unmoved whether intoxicating drinks were gratuitously distributed in the streets, or if no wine, beer, or spirits were permitted to be sold under any consideration in any part of Great Britain.

The freedom of the dog and his absolute independence is something delightful. See him on a rainy day, when Man is packed in omnibuses, struggling along with umbrellas, getting run over, and hailing hansom cabs. See how he bounds along, splashing through the mud, threading his way in and out and underneath cabs, omnibuses, carriages, and carts. Never for a moment annoyed

with the weather, never getting run over; not dreaming of catching cold, and barking joyfully, and wagging his tail gleefully as he trots along. When I see poor, splashed, shivering humanity wrestling with the elements, shivering with cold, and getting twinges of acute rheumatism from their damp clothes, I cannot help thinking that the dog has very much the best of it. When Man reaches home, he has to change all his clothes, he possibly has to take a glass of something warm, and it may perchance be an hour before he can feel at all comfortable. It is totally different with Dog. Directly he arrives at his destination he throws himself down before the fire, he hangs his tongue out of his mouth, and he pants. He presently goes to sleep, and eventually wakes up feeling none the worse for his wetting and his scamper through the mud. I cannot help having a shrewd suspicion that in this case Dog is decidedly the superior animal.

Again, who enjoys himself most when out for a walk—the dog or his master? The master plods quietly along, occasionally stopping here and there, but there is no sense of hearty enthusiasm or intense pleasure about him. But look at the dog! There are no bounds—or rather there are infinite bounds—to his delight. He tears violently off in a straight line, and when you think he is quite lost altogether, he is back again at your feet, with his

tongue hanging out and panting like a locomotive. He gives you a bright look with his kindly eyes, and he shakes his head as much as to say, "Isn't this prime fun? but you don't half enjoy it, master!" Then he gives a whine of delight and one or two sharp short barks, and is off again, running in circles after birds, or cloud-shadows, or butterflies, or anything that will serve as the faintest excuse for violent muscular exercise.

And compare your exercise with his. It is absolutely nothing. He stretches every fibre, he tries every tendon, he brings every muscle into full play; he has no fear of tight boots, he is not troubled with corns, he has no twinge of the gout. He goes ten miles to your one; he has playful scrimmages with other dogs; he rolls madly on the grass, shooting out his legs in all directions like telescopes; he thrusts his nose into hedges and hunts for imaginary rats; he paddles in ditches, he takes copious drinks of water—water that you would require to be thoroughly filtered and fortified with brandy before you would dare to touch it. He takes a swim in the river and shakes himself violently when he comes out, and then off he starts for another mad chase as fast as his legs will carry him.

If you go through a town or village, what a deal he has to look after, and what an amount of important business he has to transact! He always has

special enemies that live down impracticable courts, or who are chained up in impossible courtyards, and he feels compelled to go and jeer at them, to invite them to a little playful sparring, just to keep his hand in. Then he rushes into butchers' shops, to see if there is a stray bone or two about; he looks into bakers', where he has been occasionally treated to biscuit; he tries to make friends with the children; he pokes his nose into perambulators; he barks at officials, especially postmen, policemen, and beadles; he runs into public-houses; he takes flying trips round stable-yards; he chivies stray fowls; he bristles up his back at a big pink pig which is being driven home; and he shakes his head and hangs out his tongue at the most important personage of the township, who strides with stately step along the footway.

Nothing seems to tire him, nothing seems to interfere with his keen sense of enjoyment, and nothing can repress his tremendous spirits and everlasting good humour. The only thing that will annoy him is if you drive home and want him to go in the conveyance with you. Then he begins to show symptoms of mistrust. He first gazes plaintively at you, then he looks almost savagely at the driver. He will not remain at the bottom of the carriage, but he jumps on the front seat; he sits there uneasily; he screws up his eyes and looks silly; he turns round and round, but cannot find a

comfortable resting-place; he gives a faint whine, then a tremendous gape, and finally settles down, giving a dissatisfied growl, with his head on his fore-paws, but with his eyes well open, on the look-out for anything that may occur. And presently, when the trap stops, he is out in a moment; he is off and away for another mad chase across the country, and barking joyfully at his emancipation.

The great reason of the superiority of the dog over all other animals is that he lives in accordance with nature; the morrow gives him no anxiety, and his brethren give him no trouble. He does not worry himself as to what he shall do next week, neither does he care a single meat-skewer as to the welfare of his relatives. He does not cringe before a popular mastiff, neither does he wait humbly for the patronizing nod of a noble Newfoundland. He does not refuse his dinner because it is not served *à la Russe*, neither does he grumble because his kennel is without a dado. He is probably less spoiled by over-civilization than any other animal. He loves the open air, a prodigious amount of exercise, a moderate drink of cold water, enough—never too much—of good plain food, and plenty of sound sleep, at no stated hour, but any time when he has nothing better to do.

I fancy, my brethren, we might many of us learn a useful lesson from our friend; and however much we may revere Man, I think I have said enough to

show that, in many important respects, Dog is the Superior Animal. If my noble old Saint Bernard "Monk" were here, along with "Jerry," best of bulldogs and truest of friends, and a certain handsome kind-eyed Colley, I think they would agree with me.

CHANGE FOR SIXPENCE.

If you are feeling weary, if you are out of spirits, if you are depressed, hipped, annoyed, and think you want change of air and scene, there is no occasion for you to consult a medical man, nor need you give up your occupation, part from your friends, and relinquish the thousand and one little pleasures that seem the right of the Londoner. It will not be necessary for you to pack up a portmanteau, to have your passport *visé*, to procure circular notes from Coutts's, nor purchase countless coupons from Cook. There is no occasion for you to do all or any of these things. Just put on your hat, take your favourite walking-stick, and go out in the street, hail the first omnibus that passes, jump on the knife-board, and sit there till the 'bus reaches its destination. When it reaches its destination you may come back how and when you please.

I often do this, and I find it the cheapest and most valuable tonic for brain and body you can purchase. That is how I came to be sitting on the top of a Hammersmith 'bus this morning. I hailed the first one that passed in Trafalgar Square,

and I think I have been particularly fortunate in my selection. The morning is brilliant, and the route is possibly the best one that could be selected at this time of year. I have from my elevated position a capital bird's-eye view of the pleasantest quarter of London at its most attractive period.

I see eager people rushing into the Royal Academy, and wearied people limply lounging out of it. I note people strolling up the Burlington Arcade, I have a very fine prospect of the shops, and I have private views through first-floor windows. Past the Naval and Military Club—by the way, what an excellent dinner an old friend gave us there in that most comfortable private room the other night—past the Saint James's, which awakens memories of another capital *menu*, only equalled by the company who studied it. Hyde Park Corner is quickly passed. Then we have a peep at the Row and its riders, through the brilliant verdure and blossom of the Park, then by Knightsbridge, glancing at the Albert Memorial glittering in the sunshine, by Kensington Gardens, looking just now at their very best, and catching a glimpse of Kensington Palace, and the road leading to the house where Thackeray died. Then we pass Young Street where he lived for many years, and where "Pendennis" and "The Newcomes" were written.

After Kensington High Street is passed—which

still retains a flavour of old fashion, despite the modern improvements—the ride somewhat loses its interest. The road is wide and well kept; the houses on either side are apparently well built, and occupied by the most orderly and well-to-do tenants. But I do not find anything or anybody to interest me much in the Kensington Road, the Hammersmith Road, or King Street. At the Broadway I find myself getting somewhat bored with the ride, so I pay my threepence to the conductor and descend. I do not know whither I shall go, but I think I will have a look at Hammersmith Bridge, and possibly walk as far as Barnes. I find Hammersmith Bridge pretty much as usual; but on second thoughts, I will have nothing to do with Barnes to-day.

No; I have changed my mind altogether. Instead of crossing the bridge, I go down a little lane to the left, pass under the bridge, and find myself in the Lower Mall. Here I at once seem to drift back into the past. In a moment I have stepped from an age of perpetual change and everlasting progress and excitement, to the slow, sleepy, pleasant times of many, many years ago. This curious, quiet, picturesque littoral, with its barges, its wherries, its quaint little taverns, odd wharves, its picturesque mansions overlooking pleasant gardens and the river, at once suggests Jacob Faithful and the watermen of that period.

I see a youth cleaning out a boat, who forcibly reminds me of the hero of that excellent story; and there is a man uncommonly like Deaf Stapleton, smoking a pipe and looking on, and doubtless meditating on "human natur'." That bright-eyed, laughing, dimpled little coquette Mary, with her many lovers, is, I regret, nowhere to be seen.

The green meadows on the opposite side, the distant buildings, the trees with their early foliage, the lines of mud on the shore, the odd mooring-posts and tiny landing-places, the quiet and repose of the place, the few people about—all combine to give a picture of the river's bank of long ago. As I proceed I become more and more interested with the place and its surroundings. The end of the roadway terminates in a series of humble habitations, curious courts and queer passages, in which it is somewhat difficult to find your way. At last, however, you emerge on the Middle Mall. Here may be found boat-builders and mast and oar makers, with several picturesque houses appearing here and there. You may take a glance at these; and then, passing the Phœnix Lead Mills, more boat-builders and tiny taverns, you again pass along a series of curious passages, queer courts, and odd bridges, and you presently arrive at the Upper Mall.

This is undoubtedly the best of the three. Here we have a weather-beaten river-wall of red

brick, which has become a lovely colour by reason of age, moss, and lichens. Here we have noble and ancient elms, which spread their gigantic branches across the footway, and extend their vast limbs over the river. Here may you see roomy mansions of red brick, curious gardens, tall gate-posts—surmounted with globe or pineapple—superb gates, admirable in proportion and design, and wonderful specimens of the wrought iron-work of a past period. You may take a glance, in passing, at curious gardens, where wallflowers and such-like sweet homely flowers flourish—at the white stone steps, the prim paved paths, and the carefully kept lawns. You may note the ivy-covered houses, you may observe the luxuriant creeper; here and there an ancient vine, thick as to stem, but probably unproductive as to fruit, and occasionally a may-bush or an apple-tree, now white and pink with blossom.

You may weave a thousand romances as you walk along, concerning these old mansions and their inhabitants, and you may tell yourself a number of stories of the old times as you stroll on. You will feel conscious that you ought not to be smoking a cigarette, and that your present costume is an anachronism. You feel you ought to be taking snuff with a prodigious air from a large silver snuff-box; that you should be dressed in a full-skirted murrey-coloured coat, a flowered

waistcoat, breeches of sarsenet, silk stockings, a white wig, the finest lace ruffles, and a jabot.

Your imagination, however, is roughly reduced to common-place, everyday existence by the sight of a tall chimney, by the whirr of wheels and the clank of machinery. You are quickly brought back to the latter end of the nineteenth century, by the busy traffic of Messrs. Pinchin and Johnson's Oil Mills, and a number of workmen knocking out the ashes of their postprandial pipes previous to returning to labour. I pass by the Old Ship, along a thoroughfare called, I think, Old Ship Lane, I go by the West Middlesex Waterworks, I turn and twist about, not knowing my way in the least, but putting on an air of intense business and severe respectability, as if I were either Mr. Pinchin or Mr. Johnson, or the chairman of the West Middlesex Waterworks, or all three rolled into one. I walk briskly forward, and at last find myself at Chiswick Mall.

A mighty pleasant place is this, and many are the pleasant dwelling-places that meet my eye as I go along. One mansion in particular seems familiar to me. It is a large house of red brick, with many rooms and a magnificent iron gate. Some of the windows are open, and I hear the tinkling of a piano as I pause for awhile in the roadway. The place looks too big for a family house, and quite large enough for a school. There is a primness

and decorum about the whole place, and it suddenly strikes me that this must have been the house mentioned in *Vanity Fair*, where, at the commencement of the present century, admirable Miss Pinkerton, the friend of Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Chapone, kept her establishment for young ladies. Girls' schools were very different in those days from the ladies' colleges of the present time. There was a conventual severity and a prudish propriety about them, of which little is known nowadays. The writing-master and the dancing-master—gentlemen of mature age and unblemished characters—were probably the only members of the male sex ever seen within the walls.

Then young ladies were considered absolute children till they left school. They wore necklaces of coral beads with gold clasps, pinafores, short frocks, and long frilled trousers; their hair was either cut short or plaited in pigtails and tied with blue ribbons. The utmost decorum, the strictest etiquette, and the most rigid discipline were preserved. They not infrequently injured their eyesight by working "samplers;" they did the most elaborate drawings in blacklead pencil on Bristol-board, and they acquired the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe; they were nourished on milk and water and very thick slices of bread and butter; they were required to sit on high chairs and to assume the backboard to keep their figures straight, were

compelled to use the stocks to make them turn their toes out, and went through mysterious exercises with the dumb-bells. The rule of the governess was absolute. Little girls who were naughty were sent to bed; if they were very naughty they were not infrequently well whipped.

To such a school, about the year 1812, went Miss Amelia Sedley and Miss Rebecca Sharp. And it was to the gates I am now regarding that Mr. Sedley's coach, with Sambo the black servant, came one fine morning in June, when those two young ladies left that abode of wisdom and propriety for good. Here studied Miss Briggs, Miss Saltire, Miss Swartz, the rich mulatto girl, little Laura Martin, and other young ladies who wept at Amelia's departure, and here that impudent Becky Sharp hurled from the carriage window the copy of "Johnson's Dixonary"—which Miss Jemima presented to her—as they drove away.

I can see the whole scene as I stand here in the sunshine gazing at the house, and I wonder which was the room occupied by the "Hammersmith Semiramis," as Thackeray called her; whether those three tall windows are the schoolroom, which was the garret where Miss Sharp slept, which the chamber occupied by Miss Sedley, and whether that piano that is still going is the one that Becky used to practise upon? I am conscious that a smart maid-servant who has just come to the gate

is regarding me with suspicion, and I see one or two heads looking over the blind, evidently wondering what on earth I am staring at. I think, all things considered, I had better move on.

I pass by a variety of fine old houses, with luxuriant gardens, which have comfort and stability written on every brick and tile in their constitution. I arrive at the end of the Mall, at Messrs. Thorneycroft's yard, where the steam launches are built. I bear round to the right, and come upon Chiswick Church. In the churchyard are buried De Loutherbourg, the landscape painter; William Sharpe, the engraver; William Hogarth and his wife, also his sister; Mary Lewis, his niece; and Lady Thornhill, his mother-in-law.

I then bethink me that Hogarth's house must be somewhere close by, and I inquire of a pleasant-looking old gentleman who has the aspect of the oldest inhabitant. He tells me I am to bear round by the "Lamb," then take the first to the left after I pass the "George," then the second to the right, and I shall then be sure to see it. I suppose I take the wrong turning, for I cannot find anything that seems at all like it. I ask a mild-looking woman, who is standing at a cottage door. She shakes her head and says she "don't know Mr. Hogarth at all: maybe he's a new comer." I then ask a brisk-looking young man. He says he is quite a stranger, and sorry he can't tell me.

I subsequently inquire of a baker's boy, and he

says he "never heard of the gentleman." I then interview a carpenter. "Hogarth? Hogarth?" he asks. "You mean Mr. Dawson, perhaps?" He must take me to be an absolute fool. Why I should ask for Hogarth if I want Dawson I entirely fail to understand. At last, in sheer desperation, I plunge into a blacksmith's, where the hammers are clinking away merrily, and I find an obliging gentleman, with a tremendous biceps, who is good enough to cease his hammering and come out in the road and give me clear directions as to how I shall find the object of my search.

The good lady who now occupies the house is kind enough to allow me to enter, to look at the rooms, to wander about the gardens, to see the spot where Hogarth's dog and bird were buried—there is no trace of the tombstone and epitaph now remaining—to sit under the mulberry-tree which he planted, and which is now once more bursting into leaf. It is a picturesque, substantially-built house, behind a high wall, with a large garden. The place has probably but little changed since the time of Hogarth, though buildings are rapidly encircling what in his day must have been a very agreeable country residence. There is one especial charm about the place. You see it in its real state, there is no visitor's book, there is no attempt to convert it into a show-house, the present occupiers do not bore you with anecdotes about Hogarth, nor pester you to buy his portrait or pictures of the house.

They allow you to wander about and see the place quietly, and meditate as long as you please. Why the world should have gone mad over William Shakespeare's house at Stratford-on-Avon, when they know so little and take less notice of William Hogarth's house at Chiswick, I find it difficult to understand. I know I prodigiously enjoyed wandering about the gardens that sunny morning, and pondering over the works of the great man, and I probably enjoyed it more because there was nothing of the tiresome cant and pinchbeck enthusiasm of the show-place in any way associated with the quaint old red-brick building and its surroundings.

The good lady presented me with a handful of the sweetest wall-flowers on my departure, and I took my way through the Chiswick lanes, by market-gardens, beneath blossoming trees, past the magnificent Manor House, and after losing my way several times I managed to hit the high road, and eventually arrived once more at Hammersmith Broadway. Here I found another vermilion omnibus. I hopped up on the knife-board, I lit a cigarette, and for the expenditure of another threepence was landed at Trafalgar Square. I have had change of air, change of scene, change of ideas, at a very small outlay. A very good and substantial "Change for Sixpence." Don't you think so?

AN ANCIENT HOSTELRY.

"Ber-wick! Ber-wick!" shouts a blithe young porter, with a strong Sussex accent. I am travelling, if you please, on the Lewes and Hastings line, and I put down the window and look out. The place is not the least like Berwick Saint John or Berwick Saint James, near Salisbury, nor Berwick in Hertfordshire, nor Berwick near Bridport, nor Berwick Saint Leonard in Wiltshire, nor does it in the least degree resemble Berwick-upon-Tweed. In fact it no more resembles the last-named than does the deliberate pronunciation of the Sussex porter in any way recall the word-clipping of his Northern brother. It is a quaint little station, at which few trains stop, and at which fewer people descend. I note a whitewashed cattle-truck, four or five large milk-tins, three or four sacks of grain, and a couple of wooden boxes. A polite station-master opens the door and I get out.

Don't know exactly why I should get out. But something seems to attract me. Indeed, I have a

great deal of the Wemmick about me. I once started a Wemmickarian Society, which had for its object the moderation—if not the utter extinction—of the mummeries of marriage, the wedding breakfasts, the countless bridesmaids, the silly speeches, the costly presents, the honeymoons, and all the tomfoolery which invariably takes place on the occasion of a wedding nowadays. The project, however, was so gibed at in the ladies' journals of the times, and I had so many expostulatory letters written with all the indignation, neatness, and innumerable dashes that a feminine pen can so successfully achieve, that I was obliged to abandon it. But still I remain sufficiently Wemmickarious to say to myself, "Here's a quaint, quiet, pleasant little station. Wonder what it's like! Let's get out and see." And out I get.

Now why cannot railway companies allow you to pay when you reach the end of your journey? Often in travelling by rail I see a station that I wish to alight at, but am unable to do so because I have taken a ticket for a place I do not want to go to. Certain railways issue Anglers' Tickets at cheap rates during the season. Why cannot they be persuaded to issue Wemmickarian Tickets, first, second, and third, at a fee of one shilling, sixpence, and threepence—with permission for the holder to get out where he pleased and pay the fare when he arrived at the place he liked to stop at? I

make a present of this idea to all the railway companies, and I am quite certain that during the summer season they would find it vastly popular. When I am out, and a cloud of steam, and the vermilion back of the guard's van rapidly dissolving in the distance, and a dense quiet reigns, only broken by the singing of the birds in the sunshine and the faint hum of the breeze in the telegraph wires, I begin to think I may possibly have done rather a foolish thing. It cannot be helped, however. Here I am!

There is no sign whatever of Berwick near the railway station. I find, on inquiry, that it is some distance off, and there are no conveyances thither. Outside the station I find a goodhumoured-looking old gentleman with a light cart. Don't know whether it is a private or public conveyance. So I say inquiringly, "Berwick?" "No, sir," he replies, twinkling all over, as if I had just said the best thing he had ever heard, "I'm only waitin' for a parcel. Can give you a lift as far as Upper Dicker, if so be as you're goin' that way." Now, Upper Dicker—though I have never been there in my life—always strikes me as being an intensely comic village, and I daresay all its inhabitants are full of fun. If I drive thither with this humourist, I shall probably be sore with laughter before I return. I do not know that I am in a laughing humour this morning. I fancy I have my sentimental stop on.

So I thanked my jovial friend warmly and declined his obliging offer. And after I had got well on my way down a rutty road apparently leading to nowhere, I began to think I had made a mistake. I might by this time have been working an entirely new vein of humour at Upper Dicker.

The rutty road improves considerably as I advance. The hedges become higher and trees more frequent. I meet several waggons drawn by teams of plump horses. The waggoners touch their hats respectfully, I return their salutation and walk proudly on, feeling quite the Lord of the Manor, and endeavouring to look like a Justice of the Peace—but failing most signally in my impersonation. I am not quite certain of the way, and feel less certain when I come to a cross road. I see with joy a sign-post. It has, however, so suffered from weather that the names have been well-nigh washed out altogether. There are, however, some faint, ghostly indications of lettering, and if I were to climb up I might possibly be able to read it. But it would never do for a Lord of the Manor or a Justice of the Peace to be seen shinning up a common sign-post with his eye-glass stuck in his eye, would it? No, certainly not! I shall have no more hat-brims from the rustics if I attempt so undignified a proceeding. However, by dodging round and round the post, and getting the light in the right direction, I can just make out

that the road to the right goes to Lewes, and that to the left goes to Arlington.

Let me see: there was a song something about "And Arlington and Darlington and Torrington and Warrington—You'll find all about it in your *Bradshaw's Guide*." Dear me! What unreliable sort of persons are poets. Don't believe Arlington is mentioned in *Bradshaw* at all. Quite certain this one is not. Or in the Postal Guide, or any other guide. But I do not want to go there, so what does it matter? The middle index of my sign-post, which I read with the greatest difficulty, says to Berwick and Alfriston. Good; if I do not like the first, I can go on to the second. Besides, I have heard of Alfriston, and that it possesses several points of special interest, notably a fine old inn. Who was it was telling me about this inn? I think it was called the "Star."

Now what a capital notion it would be if I were to push on and have luncheon at the "Star." Excellent idea. I always like having some object in a walk. The road is certainly becoming more interesting, and, considering the state of the country, it is marvellously clean. A four-wheel chaise passes me, followed by five dogs. Dogs seem inclined to be friendly, and evince a disposition to jump up and draw mud-streaks all over my coat. Pleasant-looking proprietor in four-wheel chaise observes this, yells at the dogs, and bows

apologetically to me. I flourish both my hands in the air and nod violently, endeavouring thereby to convey the idea that it was no consequence whatever, and that I rather preferred having yellow mud-streaks all over my coat than otherwise.

A smart-looking open fly passes. Very new luggage on the box; very newly-married couple inside. On their honeymoon, I daresay. Capital place for a honeymoon, the remote villages of Sussex in March. Sure to meet no one they know. And how heartily sick they will get of one another long before their wedding tour is over! A turn of the road brings me amid a cluster of houses and farm-buildings. There seems to be more signs of life; there are men busily engaged in thatching a roof, and there is a carpenter hard at work in looking at a door he has taken off its hinges. He looks altogether worried and perplexed. And well he may! You never know what an awkward thing a door is till you take it off its hinges. I once did this, and I remember the door immediately became about four times its ordinary weight and fell upon me, and if I had not shown the greatest activity I should have been then and there flattened out on the floor like a dried fern in a family Bible.

I meet a man with white overalls, a Prussian-blue nose, and a red ochre chin, and I gather from

these indications that he is doing a job of painting in the neighbourhood, and I ask him the way. He informs me that this is Lower Berwick, and over there—pointing to the right, in the direction I have just traversed—is Upper Berwick, and straight on is Alfriston. Wonder where Berwick pure and simple is, or whether it exists at all! Don't like to ask, for after all it might be right the other side of the railway station, in the direction of Upper Dicker. Besides, I do not know that they could give me any luncheon at Berwick. Wisest plan to trot on lunchwards with all possible expedition.

From time to time through the trees I catch glimpses of a fine old church and picturesque buildings clustered about it. This road must be very charming when the trees are in full foliage. To the left I see a stream which is doubtless the Cuckmere. Further on I find this river, or some of its tributaries, has overflowed the road and rendered it well-nigh impassable. I have to mount a grassy terrace by the roadside, and by that means find a dry path to the village. The village and the church each stand upon separate hills or hillocks, and the main street is serpentine and undulating. There are no two houses alike in height, in width, in colour, or in conformation. This singular variety adds not a little to the picturesqueness of the place. At the entrance to the village are the remains of a fine old stone cross, which seems to

have been terribly neglected and mutilated. The only modern buildings anywhere about are the training-stables; they are, however, assuming a mellow tone, and are gradually harmonizing with their surroundings.

At the back of them is the village green, on which a quantity of school-children are playing. Crossing this and ascending a gentle slope of turf is the church of Saint Andrew. I am fortunate enough to obtain the key. It is a fourteenth century, cruciform building, with a shingled spire. It has a beautiful east window, three sedilia and piscina of remarkable form, and a curious founder's tomb. The interior has been to a certain extent restored. Why the restorers should have moved the organ from over the west door to half block up the chancel with it, it is difficult to understand. I hear that further restorations are projected when funds are forthcoming. Let us hope they will be carefully considered, and that money will not be spent in garish modern stained glass, in flashy regulation brasswork, and gaudy encaustic tiles. The church is charmingly situated, and in the summer-time, when overshadowed by those ancient and gigantic trees, must make a vastly pretty picture.

There are a couple of quaint, antique cottages close to it, which I am told formed the old vicarage, that are marvellously picturesque. Their tiled roofs, their irregularity of line, their curious win-

dows, their odd doors, their overgrown masonry, and their rough timbers remind me of the sketches of Samuel Prout. And what studies that accomplished artist might have obtained here, I think, as I climb the serpentine High Street, and note the lattice windows, the houses with timbered fronts, the houses with red-tiled fronts, the red-brick houses, the ancient plaster growing grey and green, the massive window-shutters, and the heavy doors. I have been told that Prout at one period passed a good deal of his time sketching in the Sussex villages, and I should think it was very probable he did.

I feel certain I have somewhere seen a sketch of the "Star" inn by this artist. Directly I saw the place it looked like an old friend. I seemed to be quite familiar with the massive timbers, the bay windows in the upper storeys, and the quaint carvings. Among the latter may be found Saint George and the Dragon, Saint Giles, the badge of St. Richard of Chichester, and the supporters of the Dudleys, who were influential folk in this part of Sussex in the reign of Henry VII. It is a very curious old place, supposed to have been the resting-place for pilgrims to the shrine of Saint Richard of Chichester, and might have been built by the Abbot of Battle, as the ancient hostelry stands within Alciston Manor, which belonged to the Abbot. The various figures and carvings, and the

initials "I.H.S.," which may be found in various parts, point to its connection with the church.

The whole place is in admirable preservation. The enormous beams and deep walls are as sound to-day as when they were first put together, which could not have been any later than the beginning of the sixteenth century. How this ponderous masonry and massive woodwork would astonish the modern builder! He has no idea of the fine materials and the genuine workmanship employed in these grand old buildings. He would construct a long street of good-sized houses out of the materials used in building the "Star." There is very little oak used throughout the building; the principal part of it is chesnut. I was permitted, by the courtesy of Mrs. Page, the landlady, to go over the house. I saw the ball-room, as it is called—a large apartment on the first floor—and was enabled to thoroughly inspect the wonders of this remarkable old building while luncheon was getting ready.

And when it was ready for me, was not I ready for it? Picture to yourself a snug little room, with dark panelling round, and massive chesnut beams overhead, with a latticed window looking on a garden, with a glowing fire and a bright kettle singing plaintively, and mixing itself up with the mellow, solemn tick of an ancient clock, so that it puzzled you to know whether it was the clock

singing or the kettle ticking, or whether they were sometimes trying to perform a duet, and at others trying to trip one another up. In addition to this, picture to yourself on a white-clothed table such a beefsteak, such mealy potatoes, such a delightful crusty loaf, and such excellent butter, capital cheese, and a tankard of prime stout, and a tremendous appetite. What better luncheon can a man desire? Eh? None, I think; and so thinks a white dog who has made tremendous friends with me, who watches every morsel I put into my mouth, and indicates with a most eloquent tongue that it ought to go into his. I subsequently retire to another chamber, called, I believe, the "Club-room," and here I smoke a pipe, mingle with the natives, hear the gossip of the village, and what is going on in the little world of Alfriston.

I have had a most enjoyable day, and it was indeed a lucky inspiration that induced me to quit the train at Berwick Station.

A LOUNGE ON THE LAWN.

"When Taplow woods are russet-red, When half the poplar leaves are shed, When silence reigns at Maidenhead, And autumn dwindles, 'Tis good to lounge upon that lawn, Though beauties of last June are gone From Skindles." Here I am, lounging upon "that lawn." And though I well know the beauty of Taplow in autumn, with all respect to the Rhymer I am inclined to think I prefer it better in June, perhaps still better in July. Never was the place looking better than at the present moment. The late rains have been rather a nuisance, and have spoiled the beauty of blossom in a degree, but they have given a wonderful freshness to the foliage.

And they have been capital for the strawberries!

I had some excellent strawberries last night, and I hear they are likely to be very plentiful. Do you remember John Leech's wonderful sketch called, I think, "Perfect Enjoyment"? It represented a fat, gormandizing boy, with six enormous pottles of strawberries, sitting in the corner of a secluded wood all by himself, and pegging away and enjoying

himself prodigiously. What made me think of this, now? Well, I'll tell you. Because at the present moment I can see a very pretty little girl, in a pretty white frock, in a canoe in the shade, with a very large punnet of very large strawberries in her lap, and I can see she is getting through them in a most steady and businesslike fashion.

It is evidently no chance affair. It is a prearranged scheme. For she has a paper of powdered sugar, in which she dips the berries and pops them in her mouth with a rhythmic regularity till they are all gone. She then sucks her little pink-stained fingers, dabbles them in the river, and dries them on her pocket-handkerchief. I see she has stained her pretty white frock in many places, and she views these stains with alarm. The pocket-handkerchief is once more applied, but it seems to make it worse. Now I happen to know this little lass has a couple of sisters, and I think it is very probable the large basket of strawberries was given to her for the purpose of sharing with them.

Now the stained frock will be strong evidence against her, the poor strawberryless sisters will rob her of any sympathy, and her mama—who accounts selfishness a crime—will be very angry with her, and will probably punish her severely. I see the little lady look round furtively as she paddles slowly by the lawn. She sees me, she starts, she pouts, she shakes her shoulders, and then she

shows her dimples and gives a pleading look with those large grey eyes, as much as to say, "You won't tell, now, will you?" I smile as she passes by. Of course, I should never betray the confidence of even the smallest of womankind, and her secret is quite safe with me. But, I fear, her mama will find it out, and the little lass will get into trouble before the day is over.

I am sorry for her. She seems too pretty to be punished. But is prettiness any argument against punishment when she does wrong? No, certainly not—at least it should not be; but as a matter of fact it usually is. You generally find the flower of the flock may do as it pleases and have what it likes, while the remainder, who do not happen to be so well favoured, have to put up with anything. I light a fresh pipe, I take a few turns up and down the lawn, I sit down again, and I moralize and philosophize to myself. I see the Strawberry Girl's—she is much prettier than Sir Joshua's famous picture—two sisters come over the bridge; they have been for a walk into Maidenhead, and they are probably longing for strawberries.

That exceedingly naughty Strawberry Girl has, I see, drifted through the arch and is slowly paddling in the direction of Bray. A fair-haired damsel in a pink frock has just stepped out on the lawn from one of the French windows. She takes her seat under a tree at the further end of the lawn. She

carries a large sunshade, so that I can only see the tip of a rounded chin, but I note she is greatly interested in "Broken to Harness." Now I particularly want to read it once more, and I feel quite angry to see her enjoying it so much. I wish the pink-frocked damsel would go away and forget to take Edmund Yates's excellent novel with her. But of course she won't, so I sit idly here and listen to the ceaseless rustle of the leaves, and the "rhythm of the rullock and the music of the oar" of some boat going at an easy swing down to Bray, or toiling against the stiffish bit of stream up to Boulter's Lock.

I feel that I ought to be going somewhere or doing something. But I am honestly of the opinion that I am much better off by staying where I am and doing nothing. I really think if Amerden Bank existed as an inn, as it did in the old days, I should feel sufficiently energetic to scull down there to luncheon. Do you remember old Mr. Franklin, the landlord, a fine staunch, straightforward Tory of the old school? Do you recollect how he used to wait on you himself, and with what pride did he pour out that fine old ale of his? And that ale was something to be proud of. Landlords like Mr. Franklin, and ale such as he gave you, are getting rarer and rarer every day. There was no pretension about the place, but everything was the very best of its kind. I remember the last time I

lunched there we had eels admirably cooked, chops capitally done, a superb Cheddar cheese, and an excellent salad. In addition to this we enjoyed the conversation of the landlord and listened to fine old Tory sentiments, that were really quite refreshing in these modern degenerate days.

Alas and alas! Amerden Bank has been converted into a private house, and staunch, honest, straightforward Mr. Franklin has passed away. Otherwise I would drift down there this morning and have luncheon and improve my mind. I have a morning paper in my pocket, but I do not think it is worth while to take it out. Were I in town, I should probably by this hour have mastered the contents of most of the dailies; and if I had not done so, should have considered myself altogether behind the time. Now I am so little interested in the news of the universe, that I do not know that I should read the paper if it were spread open before me. I know I should not listen if any one read the paper aloud, and I am quite sure I shall not take the trouble to take the journal out of my pocket. How little one cares concerning the news of the day when once one gets away from London. If I were to stay long in a secluded country town, I should soon drop into a state of hopeless indifference as to the welfare of the world, and I should, doubtless, spare myself a great deal of trouble.

The damsel in the pink dress is smiling a good

deal over her novel. The Strawberry Girl's two sisters, wearing a somewhat disappointed look, trip across the lawn with a colley dog, go up on the bridge and lean over the balustrade. The Strawberry Girl is evidently missing, and being sought after. I see them pointing in various directions, and waving their hands. A light punt, skilfully managed by a brown-faced young fellow in white flannel, goes slowly by. A lazy lass on cushions, and under a scarlet sunshade, laughs musically in reply to some remark as the craft passes. The mahogany punt, the scarlet sunshade, and the sage-green cushions, make a charming bit of colour as they pass into the cool, grey shadow of the bridge. I hear that musical laugh again for a moment, intensified by the echo of the arch, and they pass out into the sunshine on the other side, and I lose sight of them.

I really must not sit here all the morning. Shall I walk into Maidenhead? No, I fancy it would be very hot and dusty. I think I might pull up as far as Boulter's Lock, see how the roses are getting on, and have a chat and a lounge there. I know there is a toughish bit of stream all the way up, but then how nice would the rest be after the toil. I might, too, go beyond the lock—there is very little stream there—and do a little pleasant mooning 'neath the leafy shade of Clieveden Woods. I do not think there is a chance of any more rain

to-day. At any rate I will go as far as Boulter's Lock. The rose-show ought to be worth seeing by this time. Yes, I certainly will be energetic, and make a start.

I go down to the landing-stage and see about *The Shuttlecock* being got ready. I find the Strawberry Girl's mama there. I raise my hat, and make some remark about the weather. I see the Strawberry Girl, looking somewhat hot and tired, in her stained frock, being helped out of her canoe. She has a somewhat defiant look in her eyes; as she passes me she bites her lips and shakes her head.

I find a breeze is springing up. There is a fair wind up-stream. Admirable notion! *I will sail up to Boulter's Lock.* I will spend some time there looking at the roses and watching the various people pass through, and then I will slowly drift back again with the stream. This will suit me much better than toiling up in the hot sunshine.

The Strawberry Girl watches with great interest the stepping of the mast and the hoisting of the sail, and waits on the landing-stage till I have fairly started. She is a very affectionate daughter in the general way, but I am quite certain at the present moment she would much rather be going for a sail with me as far as Boulter's Lock, than listening to the admonition of her excellent mama.

FOR BABIES ONLY.

I SUPPOSE it was a very long time ago; but there was a time when babies were kept in their proper places, when they inhabited their nurseries, and were under charge of their proper custodians until they arrived at years of discretion. Now all things are changed, and the baby literally pervades the world.

As long as these small editions of humanity remained undemonstrative, and were not, so to speak, triumphantly flourished in the face of everybody, it was all very well, and they did not prove themselves to be an annoyance to anybody beyond their own family circle; but now, when babydom forces itself upon our notice wherever we may go, and demands our attention whether we will or no, it is very clear we must do something for it. It is a "crying evil" that cannot be easily abolished, therefore we must meet the thing boldly, and do what we can for it.

Granted that Baby is a necessity, it is clear that Baby should be legislated for. Baby is becoming an important power in the State, and must no longer be treated with that scant courtesy that it has hitherto received. It is so important that it

may be reckoned the Fifth Estate of the realm. Queen, Lords, Commons, Press, and—Baby. We have a Home Secretary, a Foreign Secretary, a Colonial Secretary, a War Secretary, and an Indian Secretary; and I see no reason why we should not have a Secretary of State for Babydom. If we require five secretaries to protect grown men, we might certainly afford one secretary to take care of those babies who will eventually become the men the five secretaries look after.

I see no reason whatever that Baby should not have an organ—or one or two organs—in which its wants, its woes, and its grievances should be duly chronicled. Fancy the *Daily Rattle*, the *Weekly Coral*, the *Powder-Puff*, and the *Monthly Nurse!* I think, too, that this influential class might return a member of Parliament—or, better still, three members of Parliament—to represent it in the Conservative, the Liberal, and the Independent interests.

A paternal Government has, within the last few years, established a cumbrous machinery which it calls the School Board, to look after the education of children. A very laudable project, certainly; but my complaint is that they do not take the children of the kingdom in hand soon enough. They should begin when they are babies. What is the good of spending a large sum of money on the education of a child when it has been dropped

and had its brain knocked on one side by a careless nurse when it was a baby? It is physically unable to learn, therefore why spend money upon it? If half the sum that has been spent on education had been devoted to wholesome food, the inculcation of cleanliness, and the proper attention to health, we should find we had a hearty, truthful, stalwart set of people at our command, fit to take places in our army, navy, or domestic service, instead of a sickly crew who are so well educated that they are above every honest situation within their grasp. That is my view of the question. I daresay no one will agree with me, and I may be altogether wrong. But still it is my honest conviction.

I have been moved to make these remarks by much personal inconvenience. I have recently suffered acutely at the hands of the Universal Baby—I fancy you will find Self at the bottom of most philanthropy—in various voyagings to and fro, and in sundry travellings up and down the country. The other day I was coming up from the flourishing town of Mudborough. I did not wish to smoke, so in an unwise moment I got into a non-smoking carriage. I left my selection till somewhat late, and as I stepped in, made sure there would be no other passengers. I was, however, mistaken. The train had been signalled to start, the whistle was blown, and at the very last

second the door was wrenched open, and a lady, with countless bags and innumerable parcels *and a Baby*, was hurriedly thrust in. Now, was not this too bad? The railway companies legislate for smokers and for unprotected females. There are smoking-carriages, and carriages "For Ladies Only" (they ought to do something for unprotected males; but this is beside the subject). They ought to go a step further, and have a carriage "For Babies Only."

What a fearful outcry there is if a man, smoking a cigar, inadvertently enters a non-smokers' carriage! And yet this man is not half such a nuisance as a baby is. The particular baby that I speak of I daresay was not worse than other babies. But it began by screaming till it was purple in the face, and then opened its mouth wide and threatened to have a fit. It was then thumped on the back. Then it became quiet for a time; then it sat up and stared so pointedly at me that I began to fancy I had committed some fearful crime, and that that small morsel of humanity was a detective disguised as a baby. At last it began to make hideous faces, and to wrinkle up its forehead like a chimpanzee. I scarcely dare to say it, but it is an absolute fact that a baby can make the most fearsome grimaces, and assume an expression of gross and abandoned sensuality that is absolutely appalling. Then it put out its tongue

and made a gurgling noise, which I took to be indicative of an armistice. I was rash enough to accept these overtures, and was, for the remainder of the journey, a lost man.

In an evil moment I pulled out my watch. The baby at once seized it in both hands and put it in his mouth, and then began to choke and turn blue. I verily believe if I had not had it tight by the chain he would have swallowed it. Then mama looked indignant. I fancy she thought I had a design to murder her infant. She regarded me as a sort of Herod in an Ulster. So then I had to make a fool of myself. I had to say "Kitchee-kitchee;" to play at "Peep-bo!" behind my newspaper; to submit to have my shirt rumpled; to have my mustachios pulled; and to talk unutterable drivel about the "puff-puff." I protest it was too bad for a man of my years to be compelled to submit to all these indignities. I believe babies in arms are allowed to travel free of charge. It is ridiculous; they ought to be charged double.

Horses are obliged, when travelling by rail, to be in their boxes long before passengers are in their carriages. This same rule should apply to babies, and then one can see what carriage to avoid. But really, now, travelling babies are becoming such a nuisance that a nursery carriage, under the management of an experienced nurse,

should be established without any further delay. It might be fitted up with berceaunettes and warm baths; it might be supplied with tops and bottoms, pap, caudle, Robb's biscuits, Ridge's food, the Sandringham feeding-bottle, Mrs. Johnson's soothing-syrup—which is, I understand, a great comfort to mothers — beef-tea, mutton-chops, milky-rice pudding, and joints with a Todgerian capacity for gravy. In addition to these luxuries, there might be a number of good, strong, serviceable toys, indestructible picture-books, and rag-dolls. Of course, an extra charge would have to be made for all these advantages, but the advantage both to the travelling baby and the general public would be immense. In taking the greatest care of travelling infants, the directors would only be doing their duty to the shareholders. It should never be forgotten that the babies of to-day, if they are allowed to grow up, are the season-ticket holders of the future.

It is not only in railway-trains that I have been victimized by Baby lately. He has taken it into his head to patronize the big hotels. I have encountered him at the Royal, at Scarborough. I have come across him at the Granville, at Saint Lawrence-on-Sea; at the North-Western, at Liverpool; and at half a dozen similar establishments. He is not content to dine with his nurse, but he must invade and render uninhabitable the ladies'

coffee-room, which is the apartment he especially affects. Now, understand clearly, I have no wish to curtail the liberty of the Universal One, but I protest against his being introduced amongst the brothers, fathers, and husbands who have the privilege of using this special apartment. "Baby prattle" may be very poetical, and all very well in its way; but you do not care about an infant turning all the muffins on to the cloth, then putting the greasy plate on the top of his head, and shouting "Hot-pies!" Why does not some energetic proprietor establish a separate room for the innocents, and boldly advertise, "The Babies' Coffee-Room." Surely that would be an excellent notion. Then the babies would be able to breakfast, to dine, and to have tea in peace. They would be able to drum on the table, upset their milk and water, fight with one another and quarrel with their bread and butter, and go through the performance of "hot pies" as often as seemed good unto them. Such arrangements were not needed years ago, when babies were kept in comparative seclusion; but now that Baby is ubiquitous, surely something now should be done for his accommodation.

Furthermore, in all large towns, say in every parish, I would establish "The Babies' Mile"—that is to say, some strip of open ground where perambulators might be wheeled in safety, where

infants would be secure from hansom cabs, and nursemaids would be safe from privates in the Guards. You may say that there is Kensington Gardens, and the enclosures in the centre of the squares. True enough; but there are thousands of little people who would be quite exhausted before they reached Kensington Gardens, and there are many more who do not live in a square. If you want to see how this sort of thing is appreciated on a large scale, just go to the Temple Gardens on a summer's evening. You will find hundreds of children waiting at the gates to be admitted as if it were a popular show, and they were afraid of losing a moment of the enjoyment, And if you watch them after they are let in, and are able to "interview" any of them, you will find they look upon the whole affair as a prodigious treat.

"The Babies' Mile" is a distinct requirement of the day. If it is sheltered with trees, if there is turf, so much the better. I am inclined to think that too much of a garden, where there were choice flowers and geometrically-arranged beds, would be a mistake; but certainly have as much foliage and grass as you can obtain. Surely some portion of the vast gardens on the Thames Embankment could be spared for this purpose, and undoubtedly many of the obsolete City churchyards could be utilized for this purpose. But it must be borne in

mind that the "Babies' Mile" must be entirely for babies. If others are admitted, save and except the guardians of the legitimate users of the place, these little ones might just as well be turned out into the street at once.

These are only a few—a very few, of the numberless questions in which legislation for babies is immediately required. I have not touched on the nuisance of babies at dessert, because it is a very ancient grievance, and, I suppose, will exist until the end of time, despite anything I might urge against the question. But Baby is not infrequently brought in nowadays at five o'clock tea, and rapturously kissed by enthusiastic young ladies. As Albert Smith used to say, girls are so affectionate and gushing that they must have something to cling to, and seeing this to be the case, perhaps a baby of six months old is the most inoffensive and harmless object they could select.

It is popularly supposed that if a husband and wife have not been on the most loving of terms, the arrival of a baby makes everything right, and they become a model couple for the rest of their lives. This, like most popular suppositions, is wrong, because it is untrue. A couple who have tolerated one another up to the birth of a child, frequently are estranged after that event takes place. Why? Because the husband is deposed altogether, and King Baby reigns in his stead.

He finds his home filled with aunts, and mothers-in-law, and nurses; he is not allowed a moment's peace; he is obliged to be turned out of his room; he is compelled to dine at abnormal hours; his wife cannot go out because of baby—she cannot see company because of baby.

Nothing can be done without reference to this new tyrant. A baby in the hands of a clever woman becomes a terrible weapon. Girls, when they marry men they do not like—and most girls marry men they do not like—either take to Church or Children. That is, they care less about their husbands every day, and either take to confession, early morning services, the embroidering of altar-cloths, or any other vagaries that the authorities of Saint Genuflex may enjoin; or they think of nothing and talk of nothing but their children, and care for nothing unless their children, down to the minutest baby, can take part in it. You may doubtless think this very harmless, but all I can say is that it has led to the breaking-up of many a fairly comfortable home.

Oh, yes, all these things, and many others, want reforming; but I do not see how it is to be accomplished till I see the honourable member for Babydom in his place in the House of Commons.

THE WOODEN MIDSHIPMAN.

(*See Page 83.*)

THE WOODEN [illegible]

[illegible]

THE WOODEN MIDSHIPMAN.

Going down Leadenhall Street one day, I paused, as was my custom, at the door of the Wooden Midshipman, and thought of the changes he has seen since the days of Dombey and Son.

I found the Midshipman looking precisely the same as he had looked ever since I have known him, and as he looked, I imagine, many years before I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance: "With his quadrant at his round black knob of an eye, and its figure in the old attitude of indomitable alacrity, the midshipman displayed his elfin small clothes to the best advantage, and, absorbed in scientific pursuits, had no sympathy with worldly concerns." Changes have taken place, and are taking place, under his very nose. Gigantic alterations, disregard of old customs and upheavals of old neighbourhoods, waivings of ancient rights and discontinuance of time-honoured privileges, have come to pass in his immediate vicinity, and yet the Little Man is unmoved. He still stands high and dry at his post of observation, and lets the stream of progress and what the

world calls enlightenment and improvement sweep beneath his feet unheeded.

With the London of Charles Dickens I have been familiar from my youth. When I first began "to take notice" and "to run alone," the greater part of it existed intact, and one of my chief pleasures was to wander about the localities he had described with such photographic exactness and such rich pictorial effect, and live his stories over again with their real scenery. The house of Mr. Dombey still exists on the shady side of that "dark, dreadfully genteel street." I often pass it now, and look up at the window of the room where Little Paul died. Do not say, my dear sir, or my dear madam, as the case may be, that this is all fancy. I tell you that constant study of such matters has made me infallibly accurate, and if you come with me, I will point you out the actual house, and show you the very window.

The ruthless scythe of "improvement" has, I am sorry to say, effectually mown out of existence many pleasant oases in our Great Sahara of bricks and mortar. At one time I could have taken you, down curious lanes, through odd passages and secluded squares, to Todgers's. It was difficult enough for the uninitiated to find, but when found, you would feel bound to admit that it was Todgers's, and no other. It would not surprise you the least to meet the Miss Pecksniffs under the escort of

their cousin, Jonas Chuzzlewit, coming along the street. I have often encountered Mr. Jinkins in this locality, and one day I am quite certain I saw the shock-head of Bailey junior protruding from a first-floor window. At the period I speak of, I could have shown you the house of Mr. Sampson Brass in Bevis Marks, which Mr. Richard Swiveller described as commanding an uninterrupted view of over the way, and being pleasantly situated within a few minutes' walk of round the corner. Through the barred kitchen window half underground I have sometimes fancied I saw the Marchioness at one of her "make-believe" banquets.

Not a great distance from this spot might have been seen the quaint, quiet, out-of-the-way square where was situated the business of Messrs. Cheeryble Brothers, where Mr. Tim Linkinwater resided, and where Mr. Nicholas Nickleby had his first insight into commercial life. I remember paying a visit to the "Saracen's Head," Snow Hill, when it was in course of demolition. I suppose I was the very last visitor to the coffee-room where Mr. Squeers, of Dotheboys Hall, used to receive his pupils, and when I left the room where Mr. John Browdie had that famous supper, the plaster was falling about my ears, and the walls looked by no means safe. And that reminds me I have seen the real Dotheboys Hall, near Bowes, in Yorkshire. A few years ago it was standing, and

I daresay it is yet in existence. But hold! I must not think of venturing out of London with my Dickensian recollections, or this paper will have no end.

There was a time when I could have shown you Quilp's apartments on Tower Hill, even the very room where Mrs. Jiniwin twisted off the shrimp's head and wished it had been that of her son-in-law, and if you had no objection to prowl about a shy and unsavoury neighbourhood, I might have given you a private view of Quilp's place of business, and the yard where he broke up his ships into such very small pieces that people were inclined to question whether he broke any at all, and whether ship-breaking was not a blind for a business of a less reputable and more lucrative character. I know also the queer passages and the odd galleries at the "George Inn" in the Borough. Dickens is said to have shifted the name in order that it should not be too closely identified. I could point out the corner of the yard where Mr. Pickwick first encountered Sam Weller, and the room where the famous interview took place between Miss Wardell and Mr. Alfred Jingle on the one side, and Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Perker, and the Squire on the other.

I have gazed upon the house of Mrs. Bardell in Goswell Street, where Mr. Pickwick was unfortunate enough to have lodgings, and I have won-

dered that the benignant philosopher could have been content with such limited accommodation, chops and tomato sauce notwithstanding. Have I not spent many a pleasant evening in Traddles' room in Gray's Inn, and thought about Mrs. Traddles and her pretty sisters—Beauty, Sarah, Louisa, Margaret, and Lucy? Do I not know the rooms in Buckingham Street where David Copperfield gave his famous dinner-party? Could I not have knocked at the very door of the house in Lant Street where Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Ben Allen conducted themselves in such uproarious fashion?

I was acquainted with the establishment of Chivery and Co., hard by Horsemonger Lane Gaol, and I remember, too, one wet, gruesome, foggy day strolling down a muddy court in the Borough, and gazing on the remains of the old Marshalsea Prison; I recollect looking into that hideous structure of red brick and stone, the church of Saint George the Martyr, and pausing for a time in the vestry where Little Dorrit and Maggie slumbered so soundly on the parish registers and pew-cushions early on that dismal rainy morning. I was familiar with Turveydrop's Dancing Academy, I knew the corner where Silas Wegg established his stall, the queer little no thoroughfare where Miss Tox resided, the bow-windowed riverside house, down Limehouse way, where Bill Barley

growled and drank rum-and-water, and the situation of the offices of Dombey and Son.

And after all, there was no portion of the whole of London so prolific in Dickensian reminiscences as the City. You saw it at every turn, in the ancient churches, hemmed in on all sides by gigantic warehouses, in their melancholy deserted graveyards, with their ragged attenuated grass, their blackened trees and neglected gravestones. In the odd boarding-houses and unaccountable inns that had buried themselves up strange courts, and lurked, half hidden, in unaccountable alleys, and seemed to apologize for their presence in quiet behind-the-age squares. In the spacious halls of opulent companies, which showed but an old-fashioned porch in a narrow quiet lane, but which presented to those who were permitted to enter their portals a superb range of apartments teeming, mayhap, with old furniture and valuable pictures, and doubtless giving on a quiet garden, worth no one knows what a square foot for building purposes, but preserved from the ravages of Buggins the Builder, merely to gladden the eyes of the plump City sparrows, the master, the wardens, and the clerk of these most worshipful corporations.

You might find countless reminders of the works of the Great Novelist in the curious old banking-houses, in the mouldy old counting-houses where so much money was made; in the difficult to find

but cosy chop-houses where you could get a chop or a steak—and such a chop or a steak—hissing hot from the gridiron; in the methodical old clerks, the octogenarian housekeepers, the corpulent beadles in their splendid gaberdine, and the "characters" who kept stalls at the street corners and sold anything you please from fruit in season to dolls' coal-scuttles. In the ticket-porters, the bankers'-clerks chained to their pocket-books, the porters, the dockmen, the carters, the carriers, the brokers, the brokers' men, and the brokers' boys, who touched their hats, who hurried along, who laboured, who smacked their whips, who loaded and unloaded, who sampled, who noted, and who scampered, who grew prematurely grey, who became quickly furrowed, and who waxed old long before their time in the everlasting struggle for so much per cent. from year's-end to year's-end.

Down by the waterside, along Thames Street, through the narrow lanes and passages leading thereto, you continually saw some spot, some character or incident that recalled something in a novel by Charles Dickens. In the picturesque old wharves, with their gigantic cranes, their odd-shaped cabin-like counting-houses, their unaccountable sheds, their vast beams and supports, their gigantic scales and weighing-machines, their glimpses of the river, with its red-funnelled

steamers, its picturesque billyboys, its forests of masts and elaborate tracery of rigging. As you listened to the whirr of the crane, the yeo-yeo of the sailors, the clink-clank of the windlass—over and over again, some well-remembered passage in one of your favourite volumes would recur to you.

There were also many ancient shops, which had existed in exactly the same place, with apparently the same goods in the window and the same shopman behind the counter ever since you could recollect, and for aught you knew ever since your grandfather could recollect. I can call to mind not a few of these. There was a glove-shop—the proprietor looked as if he might have been an under-secretary in Mr. William Pitt's Cabinet—there was a chemist's shop up a court; there was a tea-shop; there was a button-shop; there was a law-stationer's; there was a print-shop; there was a fishing-tackle shop and a silversmith's. These were of the oldest of old fashions; their proprietors were the most old-fashioned of old-fashioned people, and they all did business in a most old-fashioned way. All these shops had a distinct Dickensesque flavour about them, but most of them have been now swept away in order to make room for the palatial buildings which are now crowding the City, and gradually altering its entire character.

Time after time in visiting the City have I

grieved to find one after another of these shops removed, and other quaint corners and ancient landmarks swept away altogether. One, however, always remained, and that had perhaps the most distinct connection and association with Charles Dickens of any spot in the City—namely, the Wooden Midshipman in Leadenhall Street. Everyone knows the Wooden Midshipman, and everyone knows the important figure it makes in "Dombey and Son." To myself this shop is especially interesting. When I was a boy, the very first book of Dickens's that I read was "Dombey and Son." Going through Leadenhall Street shortly afterwards, I noted the Wooden Midshipman, and at once "spotted" it as the original of Sol Gills's residence. The description is so vivid and exact that it is unmistakable. It was many years after that I knew, for an actual fact, that this was really the shop that was so graphically sketched in the novel.

Passing down the street only the other day, I paused once more at the door of the Wooden Midshipman. I looked in at the window. Everything looked pretty much as usual. But stay! I see a white placard in a prominent position, and which startles me as if I had seen a ghost. The placard is to the effect that the business is being removed to One hundred and fifty-six Minories, on account of the premises being pulled down for

improvement. "He was a callous, obdurate, conceited midshipman, intent on his own discoveries, and caring as little for what went on about him, terrestrially, as Archimedes at the taking of Syracuse." He *is* "a callous, obdurate, conceited midshipman," for despite this unlooked-for catastrophe, this terrible calamity, he stands at the door looking as blithe and gay and contented as he has looked any time I suppose during the past century. Men may come and men may go, but he observes for ever.

He has outlived most of his compeers, and he has seen many changes in Leadenhall Street. Long before the palatial mansion of John Company, over the way, was disestablished and pulled down, he was an institution in the street. I have no doubt that he often gazed upon Charles Lamb, who generally came to his office in the India House very late in the morning, but as he pointed out in reply to the expostulations of an indignant chief, he made up for it by leaving very early. I have no doubt that the gentle Elia often exchanged winks with the Midshipman when the former was "leaving early," in order to enjoy a ramble at Islington, or a merry dinner at some rare old City tavern with congenial companions.

This quaint old-fashioned shop is almost the last of a number of quaint old-fashioned buildings which, but a few years ago, abounded in Leaden-

hall Street, especially on this side of the way. It has but little changed in appearance since it was first opened in 1773, only six years after the publication of the first nautical almanac. It was established by Mr. William Heather as a "sea chart, map, and mathematical instrument warehouse," "where may be had," we are informed, "Hadley's Quadrants and Sextants of all Sizes, neatly mounted with two Parallel Glasses, accurately divided by the Patent Machines, and warranted good; Gunter's Scales, Sliding Scales, Sectors, Cases of Instruments, and Compasses of all sorts; Sea Telescopes from One to Three Feet long, with Four or Six Glasses, &c." Mr. Heather was succeeded by Mr. J. W. Norie in 1814, who was joined by Mr. George Wilson in 1834. Hence the firm of Norie and Wilson, under which style the business is still carried on by Mr. Charles Wilson and his sons.

The Wooden Midshipman has probably seen more of City business and its various fluctuations and phases during the past century than most people. When he first commenced taking his observations there were plenty of people remaining who remembered acutely the losses they had sustained during the South Sea Bubble. Change Alley and Garraway's Coffee-House wore very nearly as picturesque an aspect as they present in the late Edward Mathew Ward's famous

picture. In those days the City merchant was a man of considerable importance and not a little sense. He "lived over the shop," he and his wife and family resided at the place of business; they patronized the City shops and the City markets, and on Sunday they might be found filling a gigantic black oaken pew in one of the fine old City churches.

Clubs were then unknown in the City; but there were grand old taverns and cosy coffee-houses, where the City merchant could smoke his "pipe of Virginia" and discuss the news of the day, and crack a bottle of wine of a vintage impossible to obtain in the present day. In the good old times there was one post a day and that not a remarkably heavy one; news travelled slowly and with uncertainty; prices remained steady from one week's end to another; and ruin or prosperity depended more on honest labour and application than secret information, the flash of the electric current, or the juggling of the Stock Exchange. In those days commerce was not chicanery, neither was business a spasm.

When news came it was generally pretty correct, and people had time to talk it over and master every detail of the information before the next budget arrived. Nowadays you may receive terrible intelligence at breakfast-time and have it contradicted long before luncheon. There has

been plenty of news discussed in this ancient shop in bygone times, you may be well assured; there have been many fierce arguments across that age-polished counter and much speculation over charts and newspapers in the little cabin-like back parlour. The place must have been a "going concern" when the news came of the Battle of Lexington, and I can imagine how the ancient captains and the young apprentices talked there by the hour together concerning the murder of Captain Cook. Indeed, I have a sort of notion that Captain Cook called at "Heather's" for some nautical instruments and charts just before starting on the disastrous expedition. During the Gordon Riots, I will be bound, Mr. William Heather trembled for his shop-windows. He probably, being a prudent man, kept them closely shuttered, closed his Nautical Academy, and gave his students a holiday, and doubtless the Wooden Midshipman, being a prudent midshipman, retired from his position at the door and sought shelter under the counter till the storm was over.

Within these walls there must have been considerable wrangling, too, when the independence of the United States of America was first acknowledged. How the Irish Rebellion of '98 must have been talked over and the Treaty of Amiens discussed! Cannot you imagine the sensation caused in this old-fashioned shop when "Boney"

might be expected to land every day? and cannot you fancy the joy and the sorrow that pervaded this Naval Academy when news came of the Battle of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson? The place is a good deal associated with Nelson. I daresay he had been there many times himself. In the little back parlour is an excellent portrait of the hero of Trafalgar, said to have been painted for Lady Hamilton. There is also a curious cup, with the initials "H. N." upon it. Besides this, there is a very comfortable armchair, bearing this inscription on a brass plate: "This was Lord Nelson's favourite chair when he was captain of the *Boreas* frigate. Presented by his master, James Jamieson, to Wm. Heather, being part of the property purchased by J. W. Norie and Wilson in Leadenhall Street, London." I wonder whether the little officer wore a bit of crape round his arm on the occasion of Nelson's funeral, or if he were hit by any of the bullets that were flying about in the neighbourhood when Sir Francis Burdett was committed to the Tower.

When the news came of the Battle of Waterloo the Midshipman must have been quite a veteran, and the establishment over which he presided as well known and as widely respected as any in the City of London. Still, I will be bound, notwithstanding the progress of the times, the gossips assembled, and though they presumably came in to

buy one of Hadley's quadrants, a case of instruments, or a sea-telescope, they remained to talk. I should fancy pupils in the Naval Academy neglected plane sailing, traverse sailing, and middle latitude sailing, during such times. The embryo admirals who were trying to reduce the time at ship to the time at Greenwich, to correct the observed altitude of the moon, to find the true amplitude, or the true azimuth, who were endeavouring to observe the angular distance between the sun and moon, and who were puzzling their brains over parallax, refraction, or semi-diameter, who were nearly driving themselves silly over natural sines and proportional logarithms, would quickly shunt all such uninteresting studies in favour of discussions concerning La Belle Alliance, La Haye Sainte, Hougoumont, the Duke of Wellington, Prince Blucher, and Sir Thomas Picton.

One can easily picture the wordy warfare in this curious old mansion during the trial of Queen Caroline, the surprise manifested when omnibuses first ran, and how people shook their heads over the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, and said the unfortunate death of Mr. Huskisson was a "judgment." The Wooden Midshipman, notwithstanding all these changes, still stuck to his post, and still made his observations on the stirring events of the age. Among other things he observed were the passing of the

first Reform Bill, the Abolition of Slavery, the introduction of lucifer matches, and the burning of the Houses of Parliament. He heard the cheers and joy-bells for the accession of Queen Victoria; he saw the glare of the conflagration at the Royal Exchange, and heard the ancient clock fall into the flames, playing, "There is no luck about the house." He noted the introduction of the penny postage, the imposition of the Income Tax, and the repeal of the Corn Laws. He has been at his post from the time people clamoured for free trade till the period they have discovered it to be a mistake. He has been there through at least four notable French revolutions. He was a witness of the mourning crowd that thronged the city on the occasion of the funeral of the Duke of Wellington. He saw the people rushing down Cornhill when peace was proclaimed after the Russian War in 1855; and he heard the great bell of Saint Paul's boom forth to all men at midnight the sad intelligence of the death of the Prince Consort. He has existed from the old days of lanterns and oil-lamps to the days of gas and electricity, from the time of the ancient and decrepit "Charlies" to the time of the well-organized police force. He has seen the navy become well-nigh perfect as a sailing fleet, and seamanship and navigation brought to the highest point of excellence. He has remained to see the sailing ships knocked out of

time by steamers, and the line-of-battle ship almost superseded by the steam ram. He has seen the whole system of commerce utterly changed by the introduction of penny post, railways, steamships, and the electric telegraph.

A more popular little officer in his own domain than our friend it would be difficult to find. He is reverentially regarded and carefully looked after by all. Fifty years ago the street-boys did not treat him with respect; they jeered at him and gave him sly taps as they passed by. Old Sam, an eccentric shopman—there have been a good many extraordinary characters connected with this place notably an old-fashioned manager, whom it is said bore an extraordinary resemblance to Sol Gills—was always lying in wait for these rascals—like Betsy Trotwood did for the donkey-boys—and many a time has he chased them down Cornhill with a good stout cane, and soundly be-larrupped them over against Saint Michael's Alley. At one time the Little Man used to get his hands severely abraded by passing porters carrying loads, and was continually being sent into dock to have a fresh set of knuckles provided. But still, unless for these accidents and his going to get a new coat, he was always at his post all day long. If he was absent the inquiries would be frequent. Old pupils, who had become distinguished naval officers —and the academy has turned out not a few in its

time—would pop in to inquire what had become of the genius of the place, and many have been the offers to buy him outright and remove him. Several Americans have recently offered his proprietors very large sums if they might be allowed to purchase him and take him to New York. It is furthermore on record that King William the Fourth, on riding through Leadenhall Street on his way to the Trinity House, raised his hat to him as he passed by.

All these details are of very great interest, but they pale before the romantic charm that has been thrown over the quaint little figure and its surroundings by Charles Dickens. It is with a sad heart that I accept the courteous invitation of Mr. Wilson to take a last look at the premises, and listen to much curious gossip about the old shop and its frequenters by Mr. J. W. Appleton, who for many years has been the principal hydrographer to the establishment. The interior of the shop, with its curious desks and its broad counter—under which it may be remembered Rob the Grinder used to make his bed—is fully as old-fashioned as its exterior. Here, it may be remembered, Mr. Brogley, the broker, waited during the consultation between Sol Gills, Walter, and Captain Cuttle. And here it was the aforesaid broker filled up the time by whistling softly among the stock, "rattling weather glasses, shaking compasses as if they were physic,

catching up keys with loadstones, looking through telescopes, endeavouring to make himself acquainted with the use of the globes, setting parallel rulers astride on to his nose, and amusing himself with other philosophical transactions." Here the Chicken waited and amused himself by chewing straw, and giving Rob the Grinder the unspeakable satisfaction of staring for half an hour at the conqueror of the Nobby Shropshire One. Here it was also when Captain Cuttle had the management of the business a customer came and inquired for some especial nautical instrument. "Brother," says the Captain, "will you take an observation round the shop?" "Well," says the man, "I've done it." "Do you see wot you want?" says the Captain. "No, I don't," says the man. "Do you know it wen you do see it?" says the Captain. "No, I don't," says the man. "Why, then, I tell you wot, my lad," says the Captain, "you'd better go back and ask wot it's like outside, for more don't I!" The entire shop and its odd corners, its quaint cupboards, its glass cases, and its chart drawers, seem as familiar to me as if I had served a long apprenticeship to Sol Gills.

I pass from the shop up a panelled staircase with a massive hand-rail and spiral balusters to the upper rooms. I look in at Walter's chamber, with its comprehensive view of the parapets and chim-

ney-pots, and see the place in the roof where Rob the Grinder kept his pigeons. I spend some time in a cheerful panelled apartment, which at one time was the bedchamber of Sol Gills, but which was occupied by Florence when she fled from her father and took refuge with Captain Cuttle. Do not you recollect what trouble the good-hearted old captain had to make this room fit to receive its guest? Cannot you call to mind how he "converted the little dressing-table into a species of altar, on which he set forth two silver teaspoons, a flower-pot, a telescope, his celebrated watch, a pocket-comb, and a song-book, as a small collection of rarities that made a choice appearance?" Do not you remember with what loving care and tenderness he greeted and watched over her? How often he tramped up and down that ancient staircase to make inquiries, and how, on the night of Walter's return, he shouted gleefully through the keyhole, "Drownded, a'nt he, pretty?" as some relief to his feelings. Two more faithful friends that Florence had in her loneliness than Captain Cuttle and her dog, Diogenes, it would be difficult for any woman to have.

Half expecting to meet the good old captain in the way, I creep slowly down the quaint old staircase. I gain the shop once more, and pass down a dark, narrow flight of steps. Do you know

what I come here for? I come down to see the cellar where the two bottles of old Madeira were kept. One of them was drunk when Walter first went to the house of Dombey and Son—to Dombey, Son, and Daughter; and the other, "a bottle that has been long excluded from the light of day, and is hoary with dust and cobwebs, has been brought into the sunshine, and the golden wine within sheds a lustre on the table," many years after, to Walter and his wife. "Other buried wine grows older as the old Madeira did in its time, and dust and cobwebs thicken on the bottles." I find I am mumbling this to myself, as I once more emerge in the daylight, and sit down to rest in the cabin-like back parlour in Lord Nelson's favourite armchair.

It is well-nigh impossible for me to catalogue the scenes, the pictures, and the characters that flit across my brain as I gaze through the skylight overhead, or cast my eyes round the walls of this quaint little room. Here was Florence brought as a little child when she was found by Walter, and here she came with Susan Nipper to take leave of him before he went on his voyage. It was in this identical room that the famous conference concerning the loss of the *Son and Heir* at which Sol Gills, Captain Cuttle, Susan Nipper, Florence, and Jack Bunsby were present. It was

on that occasion that the great commander of the *Cautious Clara* delivered his famous oracular opinion, "Whereby, why not? If so, what odds? Can any man say otherwise? No. Avast then!" This strikes one as being very much more original than Nelson's "England expects every man will do his duty," or Wellington's "Up Guards and at 'em." Here it was, too, that Captain Cuttle, after the disappearance of Sol Gills, took possession; here that worthy had a service every Sunday night for the benefit of that snivelling young hypocrite, Rob. Here did the captain interview Mr. Toots on sundry and various occasions, here in presence of the mortal Bunsby did he read the last will and testament of Solomon Gills, and the letter to Ned Cuttle, and here was he discovered, after many weeks' hiding, by Mrs. MacStinger and her demonstrative children, Alexander, Juliana, and Chowley.

It was to this odd-shaped, snug, queer little panelled parlour came poor Florence and her faithful Diogenes, when she fled from her brutal father and the grim cold house. Here did the captain cook that marvellous little dinner, which makes you quite hungry to read about. "Basting the fowl from time to time as it turned on a string before the fire, making hot gravy in a second little saucepan, boiling a handful of potatoes in a

third, never forgetting the egg-sauce in the first, and making an impartial round of boiling and stirring with the most useful of spoons every minute. Besides these cares, the captain had to keep an eye on a diminutive frying-pan, in which some sausages were hissing and bubbling in a most musical manner; and there never was such a radiant cook as the captain looked in the height and heat of these functions; it being impossible to say whether his face or his glazed hat shone the brighter." Here, too, did Walter Gay return so unexpectedly. Here did a certain weather-beaten pea-coat, and a no less weather-beaten cap and comforter come bundling in one night, and to the great delight of everybody turned out to be the old Instrument-maker, after all. And it was from this room that Florence and Walter departed to be married in the ancient city church, not far distant. It was here that—

But stay! It is impossible to chronicle one quarter of the fun, the pathos, the humour, the charity that haunt the four irregular walls of this ship-shape little chamber. I arise and pass out into the din of Leadenhall Street. I find The Wooden Midshipman still standing at the door "callous, obdurate, and conceited" as ever, observing the omnibuses and the hansom cabs as earnestly as he did the hackney coaches aforetime,

and apparently quite oblivious that his century of observations in Leadenhall Street is drawing to a close.

Since writing the above the whole place has been demolished, and The Wooden Midshipman, in his old home, as Charles Dickens pictured him, only now exists in the magic pages of "Dombey and Son."

MY VILLAGE.

Being an absolute Cockney, having first seen daylight in London, my earliest ideas of the country were derived from books. Or rather, I should say from *a* book. It was a tattered, dog's-eared, ragged little book. It was bound in a brown-paper cover, backed with dingy red. Some of its leaves were loose and a few wanting; it was annotated with the scribblings of children of days agone; it had been in my family for many years: it had been handed down, and it had amused and instructed children long before I came into the world. I have no doubt it was an expensive book in its time, for it had nearly one hundred illustrations. It bears the date of 1813—two years before the battle of Waterloo—and it was published by Darton, Harvey, and Co., Gracechurch Street, London. The children of those days, unlike those of the present, were not able to command the best authors, the most accomplished artists, the most skilful colour-printers, the most cunning illuminators, and the most artful bookbinders to work entirely on their behalf, so I have no doubt they were mightily

well pleased with the unpretending work to which I allude.

I should like to see the face of any small boy or girl of the present day, if I attempted to make them a Christmas present of this odd little brown volume. The artist of all the varied illustrations does not give his name, the title-page is gone, so I know not whether the author is equally modest, but I am indebted to both of them for my first knowledge of the delights of rural life. Since my first perusal of this book I have travelled much at home and abroad, but I have never, till the other day, discovered what a London child calls "real country," simply because I never found anything that would exactly fit the descriptions and pictures of my first book. Early impressions are almost impossible to efface. My first idea of mountains was derived from a gigantic panorama used for pyrotechnic purposes at the Royal Surrey Gardens. There never were such mountains as those; and when years afterwards I was taken to Switzerland and shown real mountains, I did not believe in them, because they were not a bit like my old friends. My author was a writer of considerable versatility, and he not infrequently, like the immortal Silas Wegg, "dropped into po'try." In one of his effusions he says—

> "Haste to the country, haste before
> The hollow wintry storm shall roar,

And the bleak wind with bluster loud,
Drive sailing o'er the snowy cloud:
Come, little children, wake from sleep,
And into the country take a peep."

How often have I started on such an expedition, but have only yesterday succeeded in discovering the "real country" of my imagination.

I was very nearly telling you where it was. But on second thoughts I refrain from so doing. I do not wish to have the peace of My Village imperilled by the advent of Arry and Hemmer; I do not desire that the sleepy quiet of the "Dog and Partridge" should be disturbed by the raucous excursionist; nor do I wish to see a roystering, half-tipsy crew playing at kiss-in-the-ring on the placid Green. There is but little chance of that, however. The spot is far from the railway, and it presents very few elements to attract the offensive cheap tripper. My Village has, I fancy, seen better days. I like anything or anybody that has seen better days, just as much as I detest your "rising town" and your uniformly successful man. Your densely-populated thriving town is well-nigh as offensive as the vulgar millionaire who came up to town with only half a crown in his pocket. But this by the way.

My Village has certainly seen better days. At one time I believe it boasted a Norman castle and a ducal palace: there is not a stone remaining of the former, and naught to be seen of the latter but

ruined wineless cellars. The church is doubtless a great feature. It is a building of considerable interest. Its chancel was built by William of Wykeham well-nigh five hundred years ago. Its sedilia and piscina are richly ornamented, and there are a number of quaint monuments, brasses, and inscriptions well worth studying. It is also on record that a synod of bishops was held here as long ago as 1219. Only recently has the gracefully-designed chancel of William of Wykeham been reverently restored. Its fine proportions and rare old woodwork were entirely obscured by a plaster ceiling. I ascended the church-tower this morning, and was able to take a comprehensive view of the whole place. I looked down on the ancient houses, the rich pastures, the luxuriant gardens, and the green meadows. I could see the little stream was swollen to four times its usual size, and was running like a torrent. In the distance I noticed signs of floods, but the day was clear, the sun was brilliant, the trees were gay in their leafage of russet, of yellow, and of red, the blue smoke curled lazily from the picturesque chimneys, and the whole village was peaceful and quiet—apparently as oblivious to the excitement and worry of the Nineteenth Century as the countless old parishioners sleeping 'neath the grey, time-worn tombstones at my feet.

Hard by the church I inspected a house the very counterpart of a mansion sketched in the little book

alluded to. Comfortable rooms, well-built, well-ventilated, rare mullioned windows, a pleasant porch, dairy, coach-house, stable, a large garden, a capital paddock, with a barn therein, plenty of excellent water, fine views across a beautiful country; and all for how much a year, do you think? Why, less than a fifth the sum I pay for chambers in a noisy London square. It is just the place you might settle down in peace if you married the girl of your heart,—if there are girls and you have a heart in these degenerate days. Here at one time Alexander Pope is said to have passed some weeks. I think what wonderful three-volume novels, what exquisite poems I could write, if I dwelt in this secluded Paradise. It would be rather awkward, though, if you felt a longing to dine at the Grampus Club, and a desire to pop into the smoking-room of the Ranunculus to hear the latest gossip between eleven and twelve at night. Would it not? And when I reflect that you can only obtain your London morning paper at six in the evening by means of elaborate negotiations with a general carrier, I come to the conclusion that this Paradise, even in the best of society, might be just a leetle dull sometimes.

As for My Village itself, I seem to know it all. Every spot is familiar: the villagers appear to be old friends of mine, so do the dogs, the cattle, the cats, and the cocks and hens. I know every turn

in the road, and there appears to be no part, from the general shop to the baker's, that I have not seen before. I fancy I have visited it many years ago; maybe I have seen it all in a dream, or most likely it was all described to me when I was a very tiny traveller indeed, by a marvellous old nurse, in a comfortable London nursery, when the twilight struggled with the firelight, and the latter threw its ruddy gleams o'er the pictures of lions, tigers, and elephants, and Jack the Giant Killer, many years agone.

Everywhere I turn recalls my shabby little volume; the only place that realizes my ideal of "real country" as described and pictured in my shabby little volume. The men I saw felling a tree just now, the chair-mender sitting by the roadside and operating on a broken-down chair, and even the barber, are all familiar objects to me. The barber is indeed a character. If you think you can pop in any time you please, just as you would at a London hairdresser's, and sit down to be shaved, you are most egregiously mistaken. The barber is sexton and general custodian of the church, and if you wish to have your beard taken off you must make an appointment with him. If he has not a grave to dig, or the church to sweep out, or the clock to wind up, or various other official duties to perform, he will be most happy to operate upon you. He shaves uncommonly well, and has a

most amusing fund of information concerning the village, its legends, and inhabitants to impart.

The Green, too, with its magnificent elms, quite comes up to my notion of what a village green ought to be. I understand that it is only within the last few months that the stocks have been removed. I grieve to hear of this sign of progress, and I trust there is enough public spirit left in the place to raise a subscription to have them at once replaced. Here resided at one time John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, and hence he addressed to the clerk of a church in an adjacent village the following lines, more remarkable for spite than scansion.

"Sternhold and Hopkins had great qualms,
When they translated David's Psalms,
To make the heart full glad;
But had it been poor David's fate
To hear thee sing, and them translate—
By Jove, 'twould have drove him mad."

The neighbourhood is rich in reminiscences of Charles II. and his friends, and I am told that in one house in the village is preserved an excellent portrait of the Merry Monarch, given by him to one of his adherents. I am not quite clear which house it was where the Earl of Rochester resided. Could it be that comfortable mansion, with the high stone pillars, surmounted with sculptured pine-apples, supporting the great iron gate, where I had the

pleasure of making a call just now? If it had been I am quite certain his lordship would have highly appreciated the marvellous brown sherry which I had the pleasure of tasting. No, the Earl could not have lived there, for I am quite sure he would have been the very last man in the world to leave a drop of that superb sherry for any one else.

Round the Green may be found some of the best buildings, though there are others of importance at a greater distance from the centre of the village. For instance, there is the old Manor-house with its magnificent yew-hedge, the ancient Rectory-house with its panelled rooms, and the superb tithe-barn in a fine state of preservation. I should like to show the latter and point out its admirable proportions, its sterling, honest, well-finished masonry—as good now as it was the day it was erected—to mine ancient enemy, Buggins the Builder. The cottages are all of the true old sort. Many of them are of the type of cottage that poets, whom no one ever heard of, are invariably born in —tiny front door, window on each side, with two windows above. Space between the latter for tablet, whereon you expect to read "*The Poet Paddledab was born here.*" Why poets of the Paddledab genus always insist upon being born in houses of the same pattern is as mysterious to me as that they should leave the honest employment of ploughmen or hedgers and ditchers, to take to

writing verses that few people buy, no one ever reads, and living on the charity of their friends. Besides the class of dwelling alluded to there are plenty of picturesque thatched cottages, irregular, out of the perpendicular, with odd latticed windows, half-hatch doors, huge, queer-shaped stone steps, and windows of ancient green glass. If you peep within them you may occasionally see village dames —just like those depicted in my volume—working a spinning-wheel of the real old-fashioned sort.

The Mill, too, is just such a mill as I expected it to be. There is a mysterious sound of muffled machinery; there is a fine film of flour-dust about the door, through which looms the jovial face of the miller. So jovial, so peaceful and contented looks he, that I am half inclined to approach him and ask him the ancient conundrum relative to the predilection of millers for white hats. Possibly he might not like it. It is a dangerous thing to take liberties with strange millers. But I seem to have known that miller and his mill ever since I was three years old. I am certain that plump brown horse, with sacks of grain on his back, which is standing near the door, is my old friend Dobbin.

In the footbridge that I pass over from the Mill, do I detect a striking similarity to the one on which the angler of my book sprawled in the hope of catching fish; and the stone bridge, with the water flowing over the meadows on each side, is the very

counterpart of that in the picture entitled "The Flood." Indeed, the words of the writer of well-nigh seventy years ago might be applied to yesterday, almost without the alteration of a single syllable: "The violence of the rain during the storm has produced a flood. The farmer's boy seems afraid that the cattle will go out of their depth. The rain continues to fall, and the water may yet be considerably higher, and carry the bridge away, which will prove a great hindrance to travellers who may have to pass that road." Indeed, if the rain had not ceased this morning, I stood a very good chance of not being able to leave My Village for a considerable period. The only thing wanting to make the reality match the picture is the ancient coach drawn by four horses going over the bridge. Four-horse conveyances are, however, but rarely seen here in the present day, though in bygone days not a few admirably appointed stage coaches rattled through every day, and changed horses at a well-organized hostelry. The inn, however, has long since been turned into a private house, the spacious stables have been converted into lumber-rooms, and the merry blast of the guard's horn no longer breaks the silence of the deserted highway.

I have been sitting in one of the most picturesque rooms in one of the most hospitable mansions in My Village. It is a room filled with ancient

cabinets, with curious prints, with antique chairs and old china. It has a rare old chimney-corner, which I find mighty pleasant for writing during the somewhat chilly weather we have just now. I can keep my toes warm, I can keep my pen going, and when my pen ceases to chirrup I can watch the blue smoke wreathing up from the fire-dogs and losing itself in the capacious chimney, or I can gaze from that snug-curtained bay window on the picturesque houses, the church spire, the grey old Manor-house, and the varied tints of the autumn foliage. The russet shrivelled leaves fall fast and patter against the pane; the wind howls dismally. Again the leaves rattle and smite on the window. No; it is something sharper than dead leaves. Rain again! And hail! And a heavy, dull, cloudy sky looks like snow before night.

My old friend comes in, mackintoshed to his heels, shining all over as if he had been recently polished by an energetic member of the Shoe Black Brigade, with a dripping umbrella, and a row of prismatic rain-drops round his hat-brim. He wants to know when I shall have done scribbling. He tells me the water is rising and if I have any letters for the post they had better be sent in good time to avoid accidents. Were it not for this circumstance I could tell you many more curious things about this quaint little place. All I can say, however, is, if you wish for thorough peace and

quiet; if you wish to "flee the turmoil of town-talking tongues;" if you would lead an honest, healthy life; if you would like to drift back at least a hundred years and forget all about the high-pressure clatter of the Nineteenth Century, you cannot do better than pass a month or two at My Village.

CHRISTMAS TRAVELLERS.

I AM very seldom late for a train, but on this occasion I nearly missed it.

Indeed, my friends often laugh at me and say I spend the greater part of my life at railway stations. This arises from the fact of my travelling a great deal and having a preference to being half-an-hour before the train starts instead of half-a-minute after it has departed. But this time I as nearly missed it as possible. I allowed plenty of time, but there was considerable difficulty in getting a cab, on account of the holiday season; the poor horse was tired and slow, I suppose, on account of the holiday season; the driver was muddled and stupid, probably from the same cause; and a similar reason caused all sorts of delay, on account of congested traffic, overcrowded streets, and every one apparently wanting to go in totally different directions at the same moment. The porters at Euston were not so active as usual; they seemed to be joking with one another—probably wishing one another a merry Christmas—yah! I had no

patience with them. The ticket-clerk, instead of being at his window all on the alert for belated passengers, was talking to a fellow ticket-clerk in the background, and laughing immoderately. If I had time I would ask him whether the directors paid him to laugh or to issue tickets. I really have no patience with that clerk; I have only a minute to spare, and yet he gives me my ticket and change in the most deliberate fashion, and then goes on telling the story to his friend, and I hear them laughing as I hurry away. Dear me! I say to myself; is Christmas an excuse for all sorts of irregularities, or for people generally conducting themselves like tom-fools, over-eating and over-drinking themselves, blocking up the streets, and overcrowding trains? Traffic ought to be stopped altogether at this season of the year, and not resumed till people come to their senses.

I daresay I should have said a great deal more to myself, and should probably have succeeded in missing the train altogether, but the porter took me by the elbow and said, "No time to spare, sir;" the guard shouted out, "Now, then, sir, if you're goin' on." He opened a door, seized me by the shoulders, propelled me violently into a first-class carriage, threw my bag and my rug in after me; the door banged, a shrill whistle blew, a deep whistle answered it, the train was in motion, and as I sank down in a corner seat I found I was on my

way to the North. I was conscious that the carriage was full: I was also conscious that the whole of the occupants hated me with a violent hatred. This was natural enough.

We always hate that sixth man in a first-class carriage who comes at the last moment, when we have tipped the guard to keep people out; when we have to move that pile of rugs, hand-bags, books, newspapers, and parcels that have been so comfortably stowed away in the sixth seat. I believe at the moment there is no man in the world so thoroughly detested as the occupier of the empty seat. I felt quite certain all my fellow-passengers hated me with a fierce and bitter hatred. I felt this all, though I did not look at them. They were scrupulously polite, and though I had burst in upon them like a bombshell, and effectually marred their snug little private party, they courteously moved the parcels from the seat, helped me in with my bag, and made way for me. But they must hate me—they could not help it. And I hated them because I heard them whispering and chuckling in an undertone.

I hate people to laugh when I am angry. I pretend to be deeply interested in a Christmas Number, and do not look up. Bah! I hate Christmas Numbers. And how I hate that senile doddering individual known as Uncle John, who always comes in a snowstorm, with pockets full of

presents for everybody and a hamper of good things beside. *I* never had an Uncle John arrive in a snowstorm, and if he had he would not have brought any presents, but would probably want to borrow money. And is not the turkey a delusion? He is not half so good as a goose: he is difficult to carve, and the only good things about him are his legs devilled for breakfast. Of a truth he is a humbug, the very Pecksniff of poultry. And what pleasure is there in "bringing in the yule log," I should like to know. For my part I should much prefer the yule log being left outside. According to the picture it seems to me to be a most riotous and unseemly proceeding. Is not plum pudding indigestion incarnate? Is not holly full of prickles; and are kisses under the mistletoe half as satisfactory as more deliberate forms of osculation? Is not wassail the most nasty and fiery compound ever devised; and are not the waits the greatest nuisances in existence? Are we not much more likely to have snow at Midsummer than in December; and is not skating on the Derby day more probable than on Twelfth Night?

Why do you send four turkeys to a man at Christmas, when you would not bestow upon him half a lark at any other period of the year? Why do you send him a barrel of oysters in December, when you would not dream of treating him to half-a-dozen in March? What do people

mean by sending you a dozen Christmas cards during the festive season, and not deigning to send you three lines by way of a letter during the rest of the year? What impels people to forward generous hampers to their friends at the present period, when if you were starving in July they would probably refuse to send you a currant bun? Why should every one be so rampantly hilarious when they know all sorts of bills are coming in, I am unable to say. Why they should give family parties which always end in a family quarrel, I fail to understand. Why Father Christmas should be —— But I begin to be conscious that asking all these conundrums to myself when I know the answers is rather slow work, and I cautiously look over the top of my paper at my fellow-travellers.

Evidently all one family, I see at a glance. Confidence is restored: they are possibly assured, although I am something of a bear, I don't bite, and they are talking freely among themselves. Papa is sitting opposite to me, a good-looking gentleman with a white moustache. I put him down as an admiral. Mama, charming lady in corner seat opposite side: the biggest, but youngest girl facing her. Next to me, I think, eldest daughter, and opposite is her sister. United ages of three daughters not over half a century. The train is going its full speed now, the country is white, and in harmony with Christmas time. I

do not think my fellow-travellers hate me quite so much as they did, and I do not hate them at all now. In fact, I am beginning to like them rather, and take an interest in their talk. They look upon me, I fancy, in the light of a harmless ulster and an inoffensive hat, and the girls chatter away and laugh merrily. What a merry laugh had the youngest in the corner! She, I found, was generally addressed as Joey. All the girls seemed to have pet names. I found the eldest was called Wonder, and the second was addressed as Bard. Those could scarcely have been actual names, could they? And *how* they all talked when they at last discovered that the Bear was comparatively harmless. Their papa addressed a few observations to the Bear about the weather, and the Bear answered him politely, and even ventured to hand a Christmas Number to mama, with a pleasant smile.

What a deal of information you may pick up if you feign solemn indifference, occasional sleep, or general stupidity! Without asking any questions, without appearing intrusive, I gleaned a great deal of the history of my fellow-travellers. They were going, I found, to spend Christmas at Feyton Hall, I think somewhere near Lichfield, and they intended to enjoy themselves very much indeed. I found, too, that they had an "Uncle John," and that the aforesaid Uncle John had behaved ad-

mirably; that he had come out strong in the matter of Christmas presents in a way that would quite put to shame the mythical Uncle John of Christmas literature. Whether he lived at Feyton Hall or not I could not be quite certain, but there was no doubt he was going to be there. I heard all about the fun they were going to have; how Bell and Bee had been decorating the church; how Charlie, who had done such brave things in Egypt, would be there. The Bard had a deal to say about Charlie, his courage, his wounds, and his honours, but Joey cut her suddenly short by breaking into raptures over Aunt Connimore's apricot jam.

A little after leaving Bletchley the snow began to fall somewhat thickly, the train came to a standstill, windows were let down, and heads were thrust out to see what the cause of the stoppage might be. Said the Wonder with a merry laugh, "O, what fun if we were snowed up and couldn't reach Feyton till after Christmas." I thought the Bard looked rather serious over this, and I am quite certain the youngest sister was thinking of apricot jam. But supposing we were in reality snowed up, thought I, what an excellent Christmas number it would make. "Stopped by the Snow" would be a capital title. Then, of course, we should all begin to tell stories, being the most natural thing for people to do when they are starved with cold,

and well-nigh frightened out of their wits. And what excellent stories we should tell. Fancy "Mama's Story," the "Wonder's Story," the "Admiral's Story," the "Bard's Story," "Joey's Story," and the "Bear's Story!" What an admirable Christmas Annual this would make! I beg leave to state I am open to receive offers from publishers for the production of this work for next year.

But, unfortunately, we were not snowed up after all—which circumstance, however, need in no way invalidate the production of "Stopped by the Snow"—but were soon on our way again, and once more were the three girls chattering merrily about the joys of Christmas at Feyton. I hear all about the skating there is to be on the pond if the frosts last; I know all the peculiarities of "dear old Mrs. Corrunup," the housekeeper; I know about the private theatricals in which the Wonder is to take part; and I discover how admirable Cissy Dimpleton is in the leading character. There is a certain "old Sir George" I find to be a great favourite with everybody. The Wonder gives an imitation of old Sir George, which I am certain must be excellent, for they all laugh heartily at the impersonation. The Admiral and mama, I see, enjoy it hugely, so it must be good. Then I become acquainted with a certain Dick Daynton, who seems to be the Admirable Crichton of the

establishment. He can act, shoot, ride, sing comic songs, and play his own accompaniments: he can superintend games, is a first-rate waltzer, and seems to be the leading spirit in every form of amusement at the Hall.

The Wonder pulls out a little sketch-book, and makes a caricature of Dick Daynton at the piano, and they all declare it is wonderfully like. Good gracious, I hope the Wonder is not in the habit of doing this sort of thing! Why, she may have made a caricature of me by this time; and possibly she will show it to everybody at Feyton Hall when she gets there, and say—"This is the Bear who travelled down with us." And Dick Daynton will roar with laughter, old Sir George will chuckle, Cissy Dimpleton will smile, Uncle John will peer at me through his gold spectacles, Charlie will say, "Not half bad, don't you know," and I shall be held up to ridicule all round. And I should not be at all surprised if the Wonder gave an imitation of me, saying, "This is the way the Bear looked when he was pushed into our carriage," and "This is the way he sat in the corner behind a newspaper, and glared at us and looked as if he would like to eat us all." Whereupon they will all roar, and Aunt Connimore will want to know what they are all laughing at, and then some one will say, "O, you *should* see the Wonder's imitation of the Bear! It's excellent." Then the whole thing will have to be

done over again. And I—I who protest against and abominate all Christmas tomfoolery—will be the indirect cause of untold delight and amusement to a Christmas party.

Despite all these terrible possibilities, I begin to be greatly interested in my travelling-companions. Do you know it is possible to take part in a conversation without speaking a word? Do you know what sympathy you may have with a carriage-full of people without talking to them? I do. I find myself getting as much interested in Feyton Hall and Christmas festivities as my fellow-travellers are. It appears there has been some alteration with regard to the trains, and the Admiral had to telegraph at the last moment. There is great anxiety manifested whether Snackleton—Snackleton, I find is the coachman—will be there to meet them. If not they will probably have to remain in Lichfield an hour. I begin to be quite anxious on this point, and as we near our destination my mind is considerably perturbed as to whether Snackleton will be in waiting or not.

I am also in a great state of mind as to who will be present at the New Year's Eve ball, who is going to sleep in the Blue Room, and whether Dick Daynton will be allowed to give them lessons in billiards. I am deeply interested in "Box" and "Cox," the two iron-grey ponies, also in the

big Saint Bernard mastiff, the colley, and Jerry, the bulldog. It is a matter of the utmost importance to me to discover whether the Cannamines will drive over from Rymerton on the Tuesday or the Wednesday, and I am absolutely dying to know whether Pearl Parcelton is going to wear the very faintest blue, or white on Christmas Day. I trust that Pearl and Charlie will not do anything silly with mistletoe like they did last year; that Dibbleby, the gardener, will let them have lots of nice flowers to wear of an evening; and I sincerely hope the Clashville girls will not be there this year, because they always make so much mischief.

I had put aside my newspaper entirely, and I found it absolutely useless to endeavour to fix my attention on a most erudite article on "The Collateral Advantages of the Impossible," in the *Oracular Review*. Indeed, I found myself taking the very strongest interest in Christmas and its festivities. These merry young maidens, with the sermons they so eloquently preached upon the subject, had well-nigh changed this Scrooge into a veritable Tiny Tim. If I were only going to Feyton Hall how I would enjoy myself! If I could only—but we are nearing Lichfield: the train is slackening speed: my fellow-travellers are getting all their belongings together, and I am assisting them in dragging packages from under

the seat, and lifting wraps and umbrellas out of the netting. The Admiral takes out his watch, and says we are ten minutes late; Joey anxiously exclaims, "O! I *wonder* whether Snackleton is there." Then addressing me she said, "*Would* you mind looking out and seeing if Snackleton is on the platform? O, I forgot, you don't know—" And then she laughed merrily, so did her sisters, so did mama, so did the Admiral. I looked out of the window, noticed a tall footman on the platform, saw in the distance an enormous old-fashioned carriage with a pair of plump horses and a corpulent coachman, and I said quietly, "I think you will find Snackleton has arrived." How they all laughed again!

Curiously enough, I was right. It was Snackleton. There were two girls who kissed all my fellow-travellers rapturously. They must have been Bell and Bee. There was an active smart young fellow giving orders to the porter about the luggage, and laughing a good deal the meanwhile—he must have been Dick Daynton; there was a tall, bronzed young man with his arm in a sling—I saw my friend the Bard give a start when she saw him—he must have been Charlie. As the train steamed out of the station, I passed the whole group again, surrounded by luggage and porters. I raised my hat, and the Admiral returned the salute. Joey waved her hand to me, laughing an adieu from

the top of a portmanteau whereon she had seated herself; the rest looked after me, with just a tone of pity in their countenances for the poor Bear pursuing his solitary journey through the snow to the North.

BACHELORS.

THOUGH I have been all my life starting countless societies for the benefit of my fellow-creatures, I am rash enough to propose the organization of yet one more, and to ask your earnest support for a very useful institution. It is to be called the "Society for the Protection of Bachelors!" There, what do you think of that?

"Bachelors, indeed," I hear an indignant lady remark; "bachelors! I have not the least sympathy with them. A nasty, selfish lot, who always have their own way; who never do anything to oblige any one else; who really ought to be"—Pardon me, my dear madam, I know exactly what you are going to say—that the bachelor ought to be heavily taxed; that he has no cares, no trouble, no anxiety; that he lives entirely for himself; that he has no humanity, no feeling, no love—in short, that he ought to be put down, to be annihilated altogether; that he is a useless member of society, and that you have no common patience with him. I am perfectly aware that you hold this doctrine, my dear madam, and I am also perfectly aware

that it is held by nineteen out of twenty of your sisters. It is precisely because I know all this that I am desirous of establishing a society that shall open the eyes of the world to this great error. Verily, my brethren and sisters, on the subject of bachelors ye are steeped in ignorance even unto the very eyes.

Folks are very funny, and affect to be vastly clever when they talk about a "bachelor tax." Why, bless your hearts, my good people, *the bachelor is probably the most heavily-taxed creature in England.* To give an instance. You hear a deal of nonsense talked about the luxury of clubs, and their magnificent dinners. As a general rule a man has his soup or fish, his cut off the joint, his cheese, and his pint of light wine. Quite enough too. Everything well served, but nothing at all magnificent about it. Nothing to be compared with the spread that is placed before my excellent friend Mr. Paterfamilias, who, emulating Mr. Toole's hero, with praiseworthy regularity, "always comes home to—dine." In the first place the bachelor has to turn out to get his dinner. I am speaking of the ordinary bachelor, who lives in chambers and has no large establishment of his own. Before he can arrive at his especial abode of luxury—as clubs are supposed by the ignorant to be—he must walk a considerable distance, or take a cab, and he must do the same, no matter what the weather may be,

on his return. A man may stop pretty late at his club, but still he will be compelled to return home eventually. He may meet with somebody he knows and likes and they have dinner together. On the other hand, there may be only a collection of bores and fogies—it is astonishing how the bores and fogies literally pervade a club sometimes, and one's particular friends and the bright, pleasant people unaccountably disappear altogether—and he may be condemned to eat a solitary dinner, and listen to the most wearisome conversation in the smoking-room afterwards. Fancy being in very low spirits and having to endure the endless anecdotes of Sir Charles Crumpleton, or being worried all the evening by the perpetual complaints against the committee and the everlasting wrangling with the club servants by that peppery little Brill Gumplin.

Contrast this, if you please, with the daily life of Mr. Paterfamilias. However much he may have been worried during the day, when he gets home he finds himself in a bright, quiet haven. Everything is ready for him, and everything gives way to him. He may return as cross as a bear, but he will be received as if he were an angel. He will find his clothes all ready; his shirt at the dressing-room fire, be-studded and be-linked; he will not have to go far on a voyage of discovery after white ties, nor will he have to grovel under wardrobes nor search in cupboards for his shoes. He has

nothing to do but to slip into his things. Indeed, the worry that is saved married men in the simple question of dressing must add, at the very least, ten years to their lives. By the time he has dressed he will find dinner is ready, and when he has swallowed his soup and taken one glass of sherry his annoyances begin to disappear, and the radiance of calm content settles on his countenance. You see he has had no trouble about ordering the dinner; he has not been worried as to the choice between two dishes; he knows his especial fancies and his violent antipathies have been consulted; and yet, strange to say, he is not always thankful for all these blessings. He will occasionally talk nonsense about the delightful little dinners at the Grampus Club. Absurd! I have dined at most of the best and the worst clubs in London, and am certain that none of them will beat a good, unostentatious dinner in a private house.

Then see how his wife and his daughters worship the tyrant; how they draw him out on his favourite subjects and talk on his pet topics. Everything is arranged for his especial delectation. There is no Sir Charles Crumpleton to bore him, or Brill Gumplin to vex him. And after dinner, when the babies are brought in, they are not allowed to stay too long; and when his Royal Highness feeleth sleepy, mama and the girls directly withdraw and leave him to smoke, to moon, or to slumber, as

most pleasureth him. His women-folk put aside all thought of themselves; they will sit up as long as he pleases, or go to bed when he likes. His daughter will play his favourite tunes, or sing the songs that he loves, if he so desires it. But if he is aweary, and cannot bear music—though they are dying to try some new piece—the piano will remain rigorously closed. And yet this man who is petted and pampered and cockered in this fashion—this Mr. Paterfamilias—will talk about the selfishness of bachelors. This is only one instance. If Paterfamilias loses anything, the whole house is agitated till it is found. I have known one of these domestic tyrants upset the entire establishment because he could not find his gloves when starting from home in the morning. Wife, daughters, housemaids, nurse—every one has been scurrying about all over the place. The master getting irritable, and saying it was a strange thing that everything must be moved directly he put it down; everybody feeling guilty; and at last the tyrant finds his gloves in his pocket, and looks foolish. But his women-folk laugh merrily as he departs, as if he had made the very best joke in the world!

Again, in a country house how the married rule the roast, and the bachelors go hopelessly to the wall. I have seen a married boy and girl—I can assure you he was at Eton only the other day,

and it seems but yesterday that she was in short frocks—occupying the very best room in the house, while an old bachelor (old enough to know better, and ought to have been married years ago, and you have the common patience with him! Yes, I know your opinion, my dear madam, but that will scarcely alter the fact I am stating)—while an old bachelor, I repeat, had to mount to the very top floor and sleep in an ill-furnished room, which was cold and draughty. Now, where was the justice of this proceeding? The young couple were healthy and hearty, and could have slept equally well on a sofa or a hay-stack. They had a capacious bedroom, with a gigantic four-post mausoleum, with couches, looking-glasses, curtains, easy-chairs, and a huge fire blazing on the hearth. The old bachelor, who was asthmatic and somewhat gouty —who really required rather more than ordinary comfort—had to climb to a cheerless room almost in the roof, where the draught cut in and the grate was so dilapidated that a fire could not be lighted. I protest when I saw that courtly, handsome, grey old man take his candle from the smoking-room, mount wearily up the long flight of stairs, and heard the poor old gentleman go coughing and wheezing to his attic—I wondered at the heartlessness of the world, and marvelled why marriage should have such precedence. And yet this old bachelor uttered no word of complaint. If he had

been married he would have growled for a fortnight.

In every phase of existence does a bachelor have to exhibit his unselfishness. Indeed, his life is one long period of self-denial. (Fiddle-sticks! He doesn't know the meaning of the word. Yes, I know, my dear madam, what you are saying, but I feel I am gradually proving my case. May I put your name down as a subscriber to the Bachelors' Protection Society?) He is always asked for subscriptions, "because a bachelor cannot have many calls on his purse, you know." The consequence is he always gives more than he can afford. He is frequently asked at the last moment to fill up at dinner-parties, when they would never dream of sending such an invitation to a married man. The bachelor is expected to think himself well off if he is allowed to stand at the back of an opera-box, while his stout, pampered, married friend has a seat of honour in front. The bachelor is expected to ride outside the carriage if it happens to be unusually full on a rainy night: he has to go miles to call on people that he does not care twopence about, simply because they will never forgive a bachelor for the slightest infringement of the rules of etiquette. If a married man feels lazy, his wife leaves his card with hers, and people are perfectly satisfied. If a convoy is wanted for ancient aunts to the May Meetings, if

an escort is required for country cousins to do the sights of London, your bachelor is sure to be called into requisition; and if you happen to be in an omnibus on a pouring wet night, you will find the man who "gets outside to oblige a lady" is, in nine cases out of ten, a bachelor. (Yes, my dear madam, an individual that you would probably stigmatize as "a crusty old bachelor.") The married man would satisfy himself by saying that there were others dependent upon him, that he had not only himself to consider; he would also think that there were plenty of other 'busses, and, if they were full, why could not the lady take a cab?

A bachelor has a good deal to put up with when he is well; but when he is ill he is, indeed, in a gruesome plight. I think it was the late William Makepeace Thackeray who said that he wished John Leech or George Cruikshank would do a series of sketches depicting the utter misery of a lone man ill in chambers, and that they should be circulated among the young men of the day as a solemn warning against the undue prolongation of the state of bachelorhood. I have no doubt such a course would be extremely beneficial, especially in these days, when men are fighting rather shy of matrimony. But what a fearful picture did Thackeray himself draw of poor Pendennis being stricken down with fever in the Temple!

How he lay and tossed and groaned, with nobody to look at him but a mouldy old laundress; how even Bowes and Captain Costigan failed to comfort him; and how, at last, dear little Fanny Bolton came and nursed him, and, together with skilful Dr. Goodenough, saved his life. Furthermore, do you remember the arrival of Pendennis's mother and Laura, and subsequently the Major? And do you recollect how poor Fanny was misrepresented and vilified—as most good, honest, unconventional people generally are—how that good little Samaritan who had saved his life was treated with contumely? Ah! the case of Pendennis was bad enough; but imagine a man stricken with severe illness in the Temple, with nothing to cheer him but the periodical visits of the doctor, and with no companionship but that of a tyrannical professional nurse, varied by occasional visits of a garrulous old laundress! Fancy listening to the wearisome gabble of the pair in the next room, and being unable to stop it! Upon my word, the thought is too awful. I have conjured up such a picture that I have positively frightened myself.

On the other hand, let us shift the scene. Let me turn up the light, and put a fresh slide into my magic lantern. Supposing my old friend Paterfamilias is taken ill. Nothing serious. Say, a severe cold, or a pain in his great toe—no, not gout, my friend P. won't hear of gout at all. So I

believe his physician says pleasant things about "muscular rheumatism"—well, say he is slightly indisposed. What a fuss there is over it! What a long face does mama wear, and how serious are the girls! How all the children are kept as quiet as mice under threat of the most terrible of punishments. Is not the advent of the family doctor looked for with trepidation, and is not his report awaited with breathless anxiety? Then how the good man is watched, and tended, and cared for. With what solicitude is his smallest want supplied; with what despatch is his faintest command executed. How his fractiousness is borne with, and his irritability ignored. And when he gets convalescent, what care is taken to amuse him, how only his particular friends are admitted; and even they are cautioned not to stay too long or talk too much. In short, if there is such a state as illness "in clover"—that phase of existence does Mr. Paterfamilias thoroughly enjoy. This is better than the dreary, grimy Temple, with the tyrannical professional nurse, the maudlin laundress, and counting the chimes all night long. Is it not? I think even Mr. P. will own that the bachelor is not such a "lucky dog" after all.

I think every one will admit, while I have been advocating the cause of a much-maligned and down-trodden class, I have not said much for their order. I did not intend to. I merely wish to

show that they are an estimable class of men, that they are unfortunate, that they are by no means to be envied, that they are not selfish, and, as a general rule, not crusty, that they do their duty in the state of life they have been placed in, bravely and conscientiously. I am sure those good ladies who inveighed so strongly against me at the commencement of this paper because I ventured to advocate a "Bachelors' Protection Society" will see I have been playing into their hands after all. I fancy that many estimable young men, who have been up to this time hovering on the brink of matrimony, will, after reading this paper, take the final plunge. I think now that it is not at all improbable that Miss Flirtaway will land that fish she has been so skilfully playing for many months past. I doubt not that Mrs. Schemington will find her two tall daughters "go off," and that certain coy suitors will come forward and claim the hands and hearts—or the hands without the hearts—of that somewhat elderly brood of chickens belonging to the Countess of Cluck-Cluck. All I can say is, that if Miss Flirtaway, Mrs. Schemington, and the Countess of Cluck-Cluck like to unite and present me with a testimonial, I shall be happy to receive it.

AMID AUTUMN LEAVES.

Somewhat of a lazy journey, if you please. I do not intend to consult *Murray*, nor do I propose to drive myself to distraction with the mysteries of *Bradshaw*. I am not going to worry myself on the subject of walking-shoes, nor have I any intention of exploiting any novel theories with regard to the balancing of knapsacks. It is not my purpose to enter into elaborate calculations concerning foreign currency, and the rate of exchange, nor am I going to seek the aid of circular notes of Coutts', nor the convenient coupons of Cook. It is my intention to *viser* my own passport for whithersoever I list, to be my own excursion agent and to "personally conduct" myself in whatever direction may seem good unto me. In short, I intend to wander wherever I please. Somewhat a lengthy tether you will say, rather a large order, give him plenty of rope, &c.—well, never mind, there are too many foolish proverbs constantly in circulation for one to always be quoting them in their entirety. And yet, with all my length of tether, with all my magnitude of order, with all my plenitude of rope

I am not going to wander very far afield. This will be the "tiniest tiny travel that ever you did see," for I do not intend to stir from my present position.

My present position, I should tell you, is in no wise to be despised. It is one of those brilliant autumn days which seem to combine the glory of the summer with the freshness of spring, the vigour of youth with the judgment of maturity. I am lazily reclining beneath an ancient walnut-tree in a good old country garden; a garden gay with scarlet geraniums and calceolarias; a garden with an undulating lawn, not too much like a billiard-table, but sufficiently uneven and ragged to prevent it being mistaken for green cloth; a garden with good old elms and gigantic chesnuts about it; with fine old-fashioned rose-trees, with an orchard in its immediate vicinity, with a prolific kitchen-garden, with fine old walls, moss o'ergrown, lichen covered, beclamped with rusty rivets, exquisite in every variety of colour, and forming a most harmonious background to the peaches, nectarines, and plums that are ripening in the sunshine. To my left do I see the arches of a rosary on which the last roses of summer, of an exquisite faint maiden blush, are yet lingering; in the immediate foreground is a baby's perambulator and a couple of hoops; at the porch of the house are several rough bathing-towels drying, and under the ches-

nut to the right a pretty young girl, with long fair hair, is sleepily swinging and singing a quaint ditty in a minor key all to herself. The old rooks are cawing grandly in the topmost branches of the elms; the melodious roar of the weir in the distance is happily blended with leaf-music, and harmonizes pleasantly with the hum of insects as they flit to and fro in the sunshine. It is as yet but early autumn, there is but a scanty carpet of rustling leaves where I am reposing; the leaves fall one by one, and as I muse beneath the walnut-tree they recall autumn trips of past days. I cannot tell you why a certain leaf should suggest a certain holiday. I am not sufficiently versed in the finer theories of leaf-language to interpret unto you these mysteries. It is quite enough for me that such things occur, and I am pretty well certain that it is not worth while to endeavour to find out the reason why. It is enough that these leaves, as I pick them up one by one, recall certain scenes just as accurately as if I were turning over the leaves of a sketch-book.

A chesnut leaf, shattered, and stained as with iron rust.—The Rebstock Inn at Waldshut. What a quaint town, and what a comfortable old-fashioned inn! Cannot I recall the excellent dinners at this present moment—the grayling with a delicate bloom on them, the wonderful salads, the partridges, and the *reh-fleisch* so cunningly cooked? I

protest I could enjoy some *reh-fleisch* and a draught of Klinkleberger at this present moment. Was there ever such a skittle-alley as that at the Rebstock? It was difficult to find, it is true, but when once found it was not easy to leave. You went into a quaint little garden, pulled up a trap-door, and descended a species of companion-ladder. You then found yourself in a rustic gallery which was hitched in some mysterious manner on the steep bank sloping to the river. One side was decorated with rude caricatures in chalk, and records of former games; the other was open, and you had a magnificent view across the country, and looked down upon the rapid Rhine boiling and seething at your feet. It was a good place to lounge and smoke, even if you cared for nothing else. But if you cared for skittles, you could take off your coat and enjoy a morning's hard work very much indeed. What matches I used to have there with my friend Nomad! The stakes were not very high. We generally used to play for glasses of the light refreshing beer of the country. How good it seemed after a long-contested game, and how often we used to have those long glasses filled and refilled! Sometimes we used to climb outside on the roof of the skittle-alley, and browse among the vines that well-nigh covered it. The queer old town, with its quaint shops, its decayed fortifications, its ancient watchmen, its gates with

their lengthy inscriptions, and the pleasant dreamy life at the Rebstock comes back to me with vivid distinctness.

The leaf of a Virginian creeper, red as coral.—Lauffenberg on the Rhine. The little station there is covered with such leaves. I recollect plucking some as we went down to the river's edge to watch a morose-looking individual who was catching salmon in some species of trap. What a time we stayed there listening to the roar of the water, and watching the flash of the silvery scales in the net. We could not get much information out of this astute official, for he evidently suspected we were poachers. A wonderfully curious old town is Lauffenberg, with a high, picturesque bridge, and the Falls are certainly well worth seeing, though on a somewhat small scale. I remember lounging round a quaint moss-covered tank, in which were half a dozen large salmon, probably the spoil of our friend at the trap, and plunging my arm in to try and catch them. I can recall a quaint old church into which we wandered, and that the whole place appeared familiar to me. I had never been there before, but I am convinced I must have dreamed about it, as every step seemed like well-known ground. Then we had luncheon at the inn in a three-cornered room; they were a long time bringing it, and we had a very peculiar soup, which seemed to consist of powdered cheese

and lukewarm water. I do not fancy the inhabitants of this little village were in the habit of receiving strangers of our description, for the dogs looked doubtfully at us, and even the ragged children never thought of asking us for coppers. I have not thought of Lauffenberg for a long while, but I feel certain that at this present moment I could take you round the entire place, could show you all its principal buildings, could take you a short cut to the fishery, and could tell you what you would get for luncheon at the inn. So vividly has this red leaf brought back the whole place to my memory.

A lime leaf turned almost the colour of golden gorse.—A pretty girl and a good-looking young fellow. She with her exquisite figure well set off by her clinging muslin dress, and he broad-shouldered and sunburnt in a tweed suit. They do not say much, but they look a great deal. He seems to find endless enjoyment in gazing into the depths of those grey eyes, and strives to read the puzzled expression, something like a softened frown, that gives an indefinite charm to her face. They have been sitting beneath that old tree for a long while. They have seen the sun go down. They have noticed the gold fade to saffron, the saffron to turquoise, and the turquoise to celadon. They have seen the flecks of opalescent cloud disappear, and the moon rise; they have seen all these

things, and they have heeded them not. They have only regarded them in the light of an exquisitely-rendered accompaniment to the pleasant cantata in which they have been sustaining the principal parts. There is a deep shadow beneath the limes; it is only the girl's soft white drapery and the youth's light coat that enable one to see that there is any one there. And yet they stay on; they lounge on the grass, they whisper low and soft. They have no fear for the morrow; they wot not of rheumatism, and have no thought of settlements. The moon is temporarily obscured by passing clouds, and it is so dark now under the old tree, that it is impossible to see what is going on.

"When black and brown locks interlace,
Or silken tresses kiss your face,
When laughter unto sighs gives place,
And pouting lips are present,
When meek grey eyes droop, still more meek,
And dimples play at hide-and-seek,
There's but one language lips can speak—
'Tis brief but rather pleasant."

Probably the whole romance of the affair will be gone to-morrow morning. Some officious relation will ask that boy his intentions, and there will be a talk of dowry. How soon is the bloom rubbed off! But at present my golden lime-leaf shows me one of the prettiest idylls you could wish to see.

A crumpled poplar leaf.—We are sitting at an open window at a cozy little café at the Lido. We are feeling wonderfully fresh and invigorated. We got up betimes this morning, left Danieli's in our gondola before most of our compatriots were stirring, and came over for a swim in the Adriatic. It was burning hot as we came along, and we were very sleepy; but when once we had habited ourselves in striped caleçons and coarse straw hats, and made our plunge, we were all right. The water was delightfully fresh; we went beyond the ropes and swam round the staging out at sea to the intense annoyance of the custodian of the place, especially when he found we had lost the two straw hats. What a curious view of Venice you have when swimming off the Lido shore! You see only the higher buildings, and often it presents nothing more than a long low line of shore with the Campanile of St. Mark's towering above everything. But what a refreshing swim we have had. The bath-keeper evidently thought we were two mad Englishmen trying some novel method of suicide. But no matter! How hungry we are! Here come the cutlets and the hock and seltzer. The Unlimited begins to sing a merry song, and to beat a noisy accompaniment with his knife and fork on his plate.

A shrivelled and scorched walnut leaf.—A wondrous pretty picture. An ancient gnarled walnut-

tree, heavy with fruit, and rosy-cheeked damsels busily employed in gathering it. They are evidently "playing at work," for they are working with that enthusiasm that only takes place when people undertake labour as an amusement. You can see this at a glance from the grim smile of the rugose old gardener, who is not allowed to do anything, but will probably have all his work in sweeping up after the young ladies become tired. What a pretty figure is that young girl who is waiting at the foot of the tree with her apron held out to receive the walnuts. Do you see what an exquisite shape are her arms, and what a charming grey shadow is thrown by her crushed hat across her upturned face? Perhaps she is not so pretty as the fair haired lassie, crouched on the ground, with her feet doubled under her. What a merry laugh the latter damsel has, as she counts her spoils and pitches them into the basket. Do not you notice she and two others have old grey gloves on to prevent their hands getting stained? This shows what amateur walnut-gatherers they are. But see that laughing child up in the tree shaking the branches, clambering about and pelting her sisters whenever she can get the chance. She has no gloves on, she would scorn such a thing; her hands are already stained as brown as a gipsy's. How bonny she looks in her short frock and frilled pantalettes, as she swings from branch to branch

with a freedom only such a costume could justify! Another ungloved one is the blue-eyed maiden standing halfway up the ladder, and waving her hands. She is evidently just promoted to young ladyhood, and is regretting she can no longer romp as aforetime. Two young fellows, who are certainly not brothers to the maidens, but may possibly be cousins, come on the scene. There is very little more work done. The grim smile of the old gardener as he solemnly shakes his head is a quaint commentary on the whole scene.

A withered vine leaf.—At Varenna, on the Lago di Como. We pulled over from Bellaggio this morning. We made some attempt at sight-seeing, for we strolled up to a battered imposition they dignify by the title of castle; we had a good view thence, and then struck sight-seeing for the day. We would neither walk to Perleda, nor would we visit the Cascade Fiume di Latte. It is quite enough for us that we can bask in the sunshine, gaze on the blue lake, and watch the sleepy white villages blinking and winking in the sunshine on the opposite shore. We have had luncheon at the Albergo Reale, and have been chatting with Signora Giuseppina Marcionni, and now we have nothing to do but to moon and meditate all the afternoon. It is mighty pleasant to sit under the vines, to smoke quietly, and to feast our eyes on the glorious colour before us, to dream over the

pictures that are presented to us on every side. To go to sleep, to wake up again, and to find the same superb panorama still awaiting our inspection. To wander about those quaint gardens, to explore the terraces, and to discover at every turn some fresh view framed in vine-leaves presented for our inspection. Then sketch-books are pulled out, and we become marvellously energetic till we discover how vain are our efforts to vie with the brilliant scene before us. Sketch-books are shut with a sigh. Some one says, "Life is short, and art is—unsatisfactory." Somebody else is thirsty. We have a bottle of *Vino d'Asti spumante* beneath the vines. We are mightily refreshed, and pull quietly back to Bellaggio in the cool of the evening.

A yellow elm leaf.—By the sea, where the vegetation almost grows down to the shore, and the autumn leaves mix themselves with the newly drifted sea-weed. The breeze is fresh, and the sunshine is glorious. There is a track of tiny feminine boot-soles along the firm sand. Follow this track, and you will discover a very pretty picture. Just round a certain weed-covered rock you will find a laughing damsel, apparently waiting for some one, for she is abstractedly writing on the sand, and tapping impatiently with her foot. The gentle breeze wraps her thin drapery lightly around her, in almost sculpturesque folds, and shows us

her lithe young figure, almost perfect in its girlish roundness. It shows us—and no better evidence of a dainty lady exists—the perfect fit of her plain kid boots, the creaseless stockings, and the exquisite fineness of her snowy petticoat and frills. She is looking very serious; she shrugs one shoulder, and bites her little finger petulantly. Her lovely hair sweeps across her face; she gives a thrilling look with her fathomless brown eyes; and for one instant, we are reminded of the picture of "La Cigale," by Lefebvre. But our little Grasshopper is quite of a different order. Though she has chirrupped merrily all the summer, there is no chance of her being unprovided for when the north-east wind blows. You may see how impatient she is at the present moment. Note how she shakes her head, and pouts, and stamps her foot. Evidently somebody is again faithless, and a certain person has neglected to keep his appointment. Her dignity is a good deal hurt, and her vanity is wounded, but she does not at heart care much about it. She trips away with a laughing face, singing softly to herself, "Men were deceivers ever." And though Charlie has used her very badly, you will find her just as happy with Jack or Harry on the pier this evening.

Yes, I thought so! I knew he would do it presently. That energetic gardener, who is ever-

lastingly digging, or mowing, or planting, or pruning, or plucking, or sweeping, has done it at last? I saw him gradually approaching from the other side of the lawn, with that terrific-looking besom, but I thought he would spare my corner. Not so; he is one of those "thorough" people who are such a nuisance. He has ruthlessly swept away my little heap of autumn leaves, and so my tiny travel is at an end.

MISS BETSEY TROTWOOD'S.

THIS morning I was strolling through the market-place at Dover, and I paused before a stall containing a miscellaneous collection of old iron, bent brass candlesticks, second-hand concertinas, dilapidated toys, and a few shabby old books. I looked through the books, hoping I might pick up a bargain—I never do pick up bargains—but they were none of them rare, and most of them were ragged. Among the raggedest of the lot was a copy of "David Copperfield." It had evidently been read till it had fallen to pieces. I did not buy it, because I have one or two sound copies, and I know the work pretty well by heart. But it immediately recalled to my mind David's connection with Dover, and I bethought me that I had never yet discovered the abode of Miss Trotwood.

It was all very fine to talk about discovering Miss Trotwood's house, but how was it to be done? Probably the good lady is less known here now than when David Copperfield inquired after her, and there are most likely none of her friends now

left in Dover. You may possibly recollect that the boatmen in David's time were pleased to be unfeeling and facetious when he made inquiries. They opined that she lived in the South-Foreland Light; that she was made fast to the great buoy outside the harbour, and could only be visited at half-tide, that she was locked up in Maidstone Jail for child-stealing, and that she had been seen to mount a broom and make direct for Calais. The fly-drivers and the shopkeepers too, made merry over his misfortune and failed to give him any more satisfactory information. Now, if I were to address any of the brown-faced boatmen who may be seen smoking pipes, leaning against posts, or ruminating on the weather as they loll on capstans, they might possibly suggest that it was "werry dry work" giving information, but they would give it to the best of their ability. The Dover shopkeepers, too, are all so affable and polite that they would take the greatest pains possible to enable me to find the house of which I was in search.

If I were to hail that merry-looking fly-driver and say, "Drive me to Miss Trotwood's," I feel certain he would say, "Yes, sir," smartly, as if he knew all about it. Then he would hesitate and look round and say, "I know the name, sir, but can't recollect the address; somewhere on the Marine Parade, ain't it?" It sounds so as if she ought to live there. You can fancy her in one of

the best houses—a rich old sister of General Trotwood, or of Admiral Trotwood, moving in the best society of Dover. Cannot you see her, with a lot of bonny nieces of all ages, from Troublesome Ten to Sweet-and-Twenty, who come down to visit her in the summer, and who always may be seen on the pier of an afternoon, or listening to the band in the Granville Gardens, or may be found devouring tarts at Winter's, in Snargate Street? I am sorry to find that I can obtain no assistance from boatmen or shopkeepers or fly-drivers. I have no guide or pilot of any description. I have simply to trust to mine own instinct, and to sail by the Dickens Chart—and if you sail by the Dickens Chart you cannot go very far wrong. If you read the text attentively you will almost invariably find he gives in the fewest possible words a complete indication of the locality he wishes to describe. It is so exactly and artfully done that if you are not careful as to a single word you may get on the wrong scent altogether.

You may remember the flyman—the only flyman who was civil and considerate to David—said, as he pointed towards the Heights, "If you go up there and keep right on till you come to some houses facing the sea, I think you'll hear of her." Now I followed these directions implicitly, but forgot David's starting-point was not the market-place itself but "a street corner, near the market-

place." This made all the difference. However, I think I am on the right path, and I step out bravely. I am certainly going up hill, quite too much of a hill this lovely morning. It is evidently an ancient part of Dover; it is a narrow and a steep street, and the houses all look as if they were turning their backs on it. I am quite certain that I am on the right track, though I come to the conclusion the neighbourhood must have been considerably built upon since the days of Miss Trotwood. I note a quiet-looking, little, old-fashioned tavern, bearing the extraordinary sign, "The Cause is Altered." I have a good mind to go in there and make inquiries. I wonder whether Miss Trotwood used to have her ale from this tavern, and if Mr. Dick ever sought relief from the labour of his Memorial in a glass of whisky and water, and a long churchwarden pipe, at this quiet little hostelry? No, I will not go in, because I think I see a house very much like the one I am in search of in the distance.

When I reach it I find it will not do at all. It breaks down at several points. It stands the wrong way; it is too pretentious; and the main characteristics of Miss Trotwood's dwelling-place are altogether wanting. I am very much afraid I have missed the mark altogether. I come upon a large cemetery on the slope of the hill. Though closed as a cemetery it is open as a garden, and I

take a walk through it. I feel more than ever convinced that I have taken a wrong turn and am not in the right neighbourhood. For I am quite certain that Mr. Dick would have come here to meditate amid the tombs, and that Charles Dickens would have chronicled the fact. I take a turn round the well-kept graveyard, and think I espy in the distance a house that may possibly do. I walk along a pathway between comparatively modern cottages and the cemetery, where some ragged little girls, playing at hopscotch, regard me reproachfully. They evidently think I have no business to be walking about their playground. I pass by a market-garden. There is a little house on the edge of the slope, which looks as though it might slide off into Snargate Street at any moment, if the market-gardener happened to lean against it. It appears to be built of wood, with sham battlements. It is apparently of modern construction, and would certainly never have suited David Copperfield's aunt. I ascend the steps leading to the Heights. I pause halfway, for really the morning is so sunny that I feel quite exhausted.

The view hence is certainly superb. You have an excellent view of the Castle on your left, the town with its picturesque red roofs, and the film of blue smoke drifting across them. There is the valley of the Dour below, and immediately beneath

me is Snargate Street, looking like a narrow alley. The colour, the beauty and variety of this scene will well repay me even if I fail to discover the object of my search. The whole scene is familiar to me, and I suddenly recollect that I have a very old print of Dover at home, that must have been taken from this very spot. This picture was taken long before Waterloo Crescent was built, and those houses certainly spoil the effect of the prospect from my present standpoint. I stay here gazing so long, and looking at the castle from different points of view, that I am afraid the sentry above regards me with suspicion, and half fancies I am making measurements or taking surreptitious sketches of the fortifications. Now it would be so very awkward if he were to ask me what I was doing there, and I were to reply, "I was only looking for Miss Trotwood's." Supposing he were to deem this answer unsatisfactory, and arrested me, and eventually I had to explain matters before General Newdigate, I am inclined to think, "Looking for Miss Trotwood's" would be considered a very suspicious excuse. Two privates in the Royal Irish Rifles pass me and salute; the sentry has disappeared, so I trust confidence is restored.

I hark back by the cemetery; I take a sharp turn to the left, down a narrow street. It is a street that recalls, in a degree, the Rows of Great Yarmouth. The houses are small and ancient, but

the inhabitants are evidently well to do; you see this in the plants in the windows, the brightly-polished brass door knockers, and the sleek, well-fed tabby cats basking in the sunshine. There are odd little shops that lurk in unexpected corners, quaint little courtyards in unaccountable places, and bright little gardens where you would least expect to see them. There was a curious little butcher's shop—so clean, neat, and orderly, like a toy butcher's shop—and it contained one of the largest butchers I ever saw. It seemed to take quite a firmament of blue calico to clothe him. He was a jovial, hearty butcher, too; it must be quite a pleasure to deal with him. I could not help wondering where he would store his Christmas joints, or how he could ever find room to cut up anything. He looks so pleasant that I have a great mind to go in and ask him about Miss Trotwood. He might, though, think I was poking fun at him. That would never do, for if he became irate and felt tempted to smite me with his cleaver, or prod me with his steel, I should probably be sorry I spoke.

Evidently they are accustomed to receive very few visitors in this part of Dover, for children stare at me and gossips stop in the middle of a most interesting conversation and gaze after me. I walk boldly on, pretending I know every inch of the way and each turn of the lane, but not deceiving

the inhabitants in the least, and feeling at the same time that my swagger is altogether unsuccessful. I think they mistrust my eye-glass. I cannot help that. If I did not wear it I could not see they mistrusted it. Query, if I dropped my eye-glass would the mistrust be removed, or should I only fail to have knowledge of the mistrust? This is an elaborate question, and there is so much to be said on both sides, that I at once dismiss it from my consideration. Like all questions that have much to be said on both sides, it is not worth discussion. Besides, it would not help me to discover Miss Trotwood's.

Here, though, is something that will, unless I am very much mistaken. Here is a curious little general shop, with swollen, rather than bow, windows of ancient glass. Behind the pane are mysterious bottles containing mysterious bull's-eyes. There are jars of pickles, packets of starch, balls of string, bundles of wood, lucifer matches, a sugar-loaf in blue paper, fire-revivers, and biscuits. Inside, the shop is very dark, but I imagine, from the odour of coffee that is wafted from the door, the bag of split peas, and the bundles of birch brooms that lean against either doorpost, you could get anything there you please necessary for house-keeping in the neighbourhood I happen to be exploring. It is just such a shop as the one where David Copperfield saw Janet, whence she eventually

took him to his aunt's. There is a young woman making purchases there at the present moment. The man behind the counter is smiling pleasantly and weighing something in the scales. I feel certain it must be Janet, and feel almost inclined to go in, call her by name, and ask her to direct me to the abode of her mistress. I am getting quite disheartened at my want of success. I pass the shop, I turn down a narrow passage to my right, and I come upon a road leading up to the Down on my left.

In the distance I see what I fancy must be the house. The nearer I approach it the better satisfied I am; and directly I am in front of it, I have no doubt whatever on the subject. It is perhaps not quite so neat as it was in Miss Betsey Trotwood's time; but there is no doubt that it is *the* house. There are the bow-windows, there is the room above where Mr. Dick alarmed poor little David by nodding and winking at him on his first arrival. The window to the right must have been the neat room with the drugget-covered carpet, and the old-fashioned brightly polished furniture where might be found "the cat, the kettle-holder, the two canaries, the old china, the punch-bowl full of dried rose-leaves, the tall press guarding all sorts of bottles and pots, and wonderfully out of keeping with the rest." The garden is evidently not so gay or so well cared for as it used

to be, and though there were no donkey-boys about for Miss Trotwood to assault and batter, there were plenty of riotous, screeching school-children on whom she might have expended her superfluous energy with considerable satisfaction to herself and great benefit to the neighbourhood. That irrepressible nuisance—Buggins the Builder—cannot be controlled even in the neighbourhood of Dover, and hugely does he enjoy to mar those spots that have been hallowed by antiquity, by seclusion, or the pen of the novelist. Hence the abode of Betsy Trotwood is not so pleasant as it must have been formerly, for other houses have clustered about the back and the front.

The house, however, still stands high, the fresh breezes from over the sea and across the Down smite it. It still has a view of the sea, though perhaps not so uninterrupted as it was in the days of David Copperfield. I thought of that view as I looked up at the bow-window of the room, where the poor, tired, hungry, exhausted little fellow slept the first night of his arrival. Do you recollect him gazing on the moonlit sea after he was in bed? He says, "I remember the solemn feeling with which I at length turned my eyes away, yielded to the sensation of gratitude and rest which the sight of the white-curtained bed—and how much more the lying softly down upon it, nestling in the snow-white sheets—inspired. I remember how I thought

of all the solitary places under the night sky where I had slept, and how I prayed that I never might be houseless any more, and never might forget the houseless. I remember how I seemed to float then, down the melancholy glory of that track upon the sea, away into the world of dreams."

With the melody of this prose poem ringing in my ears I take my way homewards, thinking how much we owe to the Master-hand who invested our every-day life with such an indescribable charm, and by his magic touch rendered commonplace neighbourhoods and ordinary bricks-and-mortar a joy as long as they shall exist.

AN EARLY WALK.

I THOUGHT time was getting on, but I had no idea it was so late.

The room has been growing gradually less crowded, the shouts of the linkmen outside have become less frequent, the line of carriages has by degrees shortened, the musicians have been going through the remainder of the programme with their eyes shut. They have introduced sundry florid yawns, and *ad libitum* gapes which were not in the score, are fondly hoping that the list of dances may be cut short, and are wondering why people who are not compelled to do it for their living are foolish enough to sit up all night.

I had been engaged in a pleasant chat in a corner, and I had been watching from time to time a space of white blind in the tall window opposite, where the warm-toned curtains did not meet. I noticed the cold hue of the blind—I fancied the moon must be shining—but gradually it became bluer and bluer, and I could see the shadow of the window-sashes distinctly.

There is no doubt about it. Day is dawning.

the best houses—a rich old sister of General Trotwood, or of Admiral Trotwood, moving in the best society of Dover. Cannot you see her, with a lot of bonny nieces of all ages, from Troublesome Ten to Sweet-and-Twenty, who come down to visit her in the summer, and who always may be seen on the pier of an afternoon, or listening to the band in the Granville Gardens, or may be found devouring tarts at Winter's, in Snargate Street? I am sorry to find that I can obtain no assistance from boatmen or shopkeepers or fly-drivers. I have no guide or pilot of any description. I have simply to trust to mine own instinct, and to sail by the Dickens Chart—and if you sail by the Dickens Chart you cannot go very far wrong. If you read the text attentively you will almost invariably find he gives in the fewest possible words a complete indication of the locality he wishes to describe. It is so exactly and artfully done that if you are not careful as to a single word you may get on the wrong scent altogether.

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the inhabitants are evidently well to do; you see this in the plants in the windows, the brightly-polished brass door knockers, and the sleek, well-fed tabby cats basking in the sunshine. There are odd little shops that lurk in unexpected corners, quaint little courtyards in unaccountable places, and bright little gardens where you would least expect to see them. There was a curious little butcher's shop—so clean, neat, and orderly, like a toy butcher's shop—and it contained one of the largest butchers I ever saw. It seemed to take quite a firmament of blue calico to clothe him. He was a jovial, hearty butcher, too; it must be quite a pleasure to deal with him. I could not help wondering where he would store his Christmas joints, or how he could ever find room to cut up anything. He looks so pleasant that I have a great mind to go in and ask him about Miss Trotwood. He might, though, think I was poking fun at him. That would never do, for if he became irate and felt tempted to smite me with his cleaver, or prod me with his steel, I should probably be sorry I spoke.

Evidently they are accustomed to receive very few visitors in this part of Dover, for children stare at me and gossips stop in the middle of a most interesting conversation and gaze after me. I walk boldly on, pretending I know every inch of the way and each turn of the lane, but not deceiving

the inhabitants in the least, and feeling at the same time that my swagger is altogether unsuccessful. I think they mistrust my eye-glass. I cannot help that. If I did not wear it I could not see they mistrusted it. Query, if I dropped my eye-glass would the mistrust be removed, or should I only fail to have knowledge of the mistrust? This is an elaborate question, and there is so much to be said on both sides, that I at once dismiss it from my consideration. Like all questions that have much to be said on both sides, it is not worth discussion. Besides, it would not help me to discover Miss Trotwood's.

Here, though, is something that will, unless I am very much mistaken. Here is a curious little general shop, with swollen, rather than bow, windows of ancient glass. Behind the pane are mysterious bottles containing mysterious bull's-eyes. There are jars of pickles, packets of starch, balls of string, bundles of wood, lucifer matches, a sugar-loaf in blue paper, fire-revivers, and biscuits. Inside, the shop is very dark, but I imagine, from the odour of coffee that is wafted from the door, the bag of split peas, and the bundles of birch brooms that lean against either doorpost, you could get anything there you please necessary for house-keeping in the neighbourhood I happen to be exploring. It is just such a shop as the one where David Copperfield saw Janet, whence she eventually

maids are proceeding to shake mats over the passers-by. I do not complain of this operation in the least. Passers-by have no business to be out so early. I meet an occasional four-wheel cab crammed with passengers and luggage for some early morning train. Hate early morning trains; would sooner travel all night than go by one of them. I see one or two newspaper-carts going towards the Great Western Railway Station, and a mail-cart. Beyond this the vehicular traffic is of the smallest description.

I come across an occasional coffee-stall, which seems to be extensively patronized. There are workmen going to their work who stare at me and shake their heads. They evidently put me down as a useless unit and a dissipated drone. I shall possibly be quoted as a terrible example in various speeches to be made at the next meeting of the Social Regenerators, with Mr. Eccles in the chair. They would also probably be very much astonished if they were told that I worked three times as hard as most of them, and not infrequently for half the wages they receive. But I am much too sleepy to work out social problems at this time in the morning, and far too tired to enter into any discussion with regard to capital and labour.

I meet a number of street-cleaners and road-scrapers who are trooping home with their brooms and their shovels over their shoulders. How early

they must have arisen to have finished their work by this time! One or two scavengers' carts drawn by sleepy horses pass by me. Foot-passengers become more frequent. I wonder what their calling may be, and I dare say they wonder what I am after. I no longer have London all to myself; the silence of the streets is broken, a faint hum of traffic is already perceptible which will gradually swell into a roar as the morning advances. There is an odour of burnt wood plainly perceptible, the smoke is gradually beginning to wreathe up, and the beauty of the early morning is already somewhat tarnished. I am beginning to feel very sleepy, I really cannot—

But here I am at home! The sun flashes on my latch-key as I place it in the lock. I open the door carefully and close it softly, and half fancy I am a burglar breaking into mine own house. No one is astir. I leave the candle and the matches in the hall, for it is broad daylight. I creep upstairs singing to myself,—

> "And she the fair queen of the numbers,
> Who went to that beautiful ball,
> Perhaps thinks now of me in her slumbers,
> But perhaps, horrid thought, not at all."

The latter condition, I should think, was extremely probable.

And as the smoke of countless chimneys

wreathes up into one vast cloud, as the noise in the streets gradually deepens into a roar, as the dear old city returns to life and begins its daily toil; as thousands are awaking to hope and to anticipation, to sorrow and to despair, to labour, to pleasure, to grief or to joy, I tumble into bed. In two minutes I am off to sleep and dreaming—of whom?

A FEW CIGARETTES.

Not at Baveno, gazing across the blue waters of the Lago Maggiore, wondering whether it would be worth while to cross to the Isola Bella; not at the Albergo Marcionni at Varenna, and speculating whether they will give us fried *agoni* for luncheon; not at Lugano, dreaming and devouring juicy peaches, and gazing at the clusters of grapes overhead—in short, not in Italy at all, but in a fine old English greenhouse, where the top lights are well obscured by leaves, now growing rusty, shrivelled, yellow, and burnt, where the vines are trained with well-ordered precision, and where the purple bunches, with a superb bloom upon them, nestle amid the leaves and ripen in the sunshine. Outside, I note a trimly-shaven lawn, beds ablaze with red geraniums, nasturtiums, and other gay flowers looking doubly brilliant in the sunshine. Occasionally is the musical chime of a far-off church borne on the breeze; just now I heard the inspiriting bugle of a four-horse coach; and, ever and anon, as I pause in my writing, the ceaseless mur-

mur of the waves on the shore strikes upon my ear like some plaintive lullaby in a minor key.

Next to sitting under the shade of one's own vine, and beneath the shadow of one's own fig-tree, I have come to the conclusion there is nothing so pleasant as to sit under the vine belonging to some one else, and to refresh oneself from time to time with ripe English figs—at somebody else's expense. And that is just what I am doing at the present time. I intimated that I should like to be let alone this morning; and though an unusually brilliant day lured me to moon by the seashore, or go out driving, stern Duty, who always makes a point of being especially disagreeable to me, insisted that there were certain letters that must be answered, certain articles written, various papers read, and all kinds of repulsive business to be attended to. So I took all my letters and papers to the greenhouse, I arranged my writing materials on an ancient oak table, and I began to think of beginning. I know I shall not be interrupted now for some hours. Indeed, the knowledge of that fact rather annoys me. I generally inveigh against interruptions of all kinds. *Now*, I should be really quite pleased if the gardener were to come and ask me what time it was, or if some one would pop in and ask my opinion on the grapes. Anything for an excuse for not sitting down to that ancient table and tackling my work.

And what a superb writing-room a greenhouse makes! Artists indulge in the luxury of palatial studios, but authors very seldom trouble themselves about the place in which they do their work. I am inclined to think this is a mistake; and when my ship comes home—I regret very much to say it is long overdue—I shall have a study of a very magnificent kind built. A part of the scheme will be a garden and a greenhouse, which shall be especially adapted to the exigences of authorcraft. The advantage of such a scheme is manifest. The great point is, you get plenty of light, a good proportion of sunshine, and there are a thousand suggestions in the colour and fancy with which you are surrounded. Here I can walk up and down, I can pause at my table and do a spell of writing, then I can walk again—in short, I get air, light, and exercise, and proceed with my work at the same time. It strikes me that I am talking a great deal, that I am prosing, and theorizing, and moralizing, but that pile of newspapers and heap of correspondence do not show any signs of being manipulated. I will light a cigarette and begin.

It is mighty pleasant to see the blue smoke wreath up and lose itself amid the vine leaves. What a marvellous colour, what an infinity of tints, and what endless variety of curve and serpentine grace do these azure threads assume as they drift away. I gradually begin to tackle my letters.

There are not many bills, none of the letters are long, and a few of them are very pleasant. The newspapers are of all kinds—American journals, French publications, and other mysterious weeklies, that are addressed in an unknown hand, and are not marked. These latter make me very angry. I waste all my time in wondering who sent them and why they were sent. Here, however, is a paper there is no mistake about, the *Lancet.* There is no chance of my missing an article which is plainly scored in red. The article is on cigarette smoking. Good! I will light another cigarette and read it.

smoke and I read, I read and I smoke, and I confess to being somewhat taken aback. I find that the practice of cigarette smoking is "scarcely less injurious, in a subtle and generally unrecognized way, than the habit of taking nips between meals." Horrible! I must take a green fig to counteract the effects. To think all these years I have been but little better than a dram drinker! I wish people would not disturb one with these appalling statements. I protest it makes me quite hot to read further that, "owing to the way the tobacco leaf is shredded, coupled with the fact that it is brought into more direct relation with the mouth and air passages than when it is smoked in a pipe or cigar, the effects produced on the nervous system by a free consumption of cigarettes are now more marked and characteristic than those recognizable

after recourse to other methods of smoking." It appears I had much better be smoking a black clay pipe charged with Cavendish or a gigantic Regalia as big as a bowsprit. As I do not happen to have either of these handy, I will just light another cigarette.

The more I read the less comfort do I get from my paper, and were it not for the soothing effect of the cigarette, I do not know what would be the consequence. I read, "A pulse-tracing made after the subject has smoked say a dozen cigarettes will, as a rule, be flatter and more indicative of depression than one taken after the smoking of cigars." I don't like being called a "subject," and I should like to catch any one making a tracing of *my* pulse—that's all. There would be some depression experienced I fancy, but it would hardly have reference to my pulse. I do not at all like the idea of making pulse-tracings. We shall be having pulse-tracings published in the newspapers like weather charts, and used in evidence in cases of breaches of promise of marriage. They will be having a sort of telephone to fit on to a man's head so that you can read his thoughts whether he likes it or not. That will be the next thing I expect. I hate Science generally, but more especially when it interferes with a man's private affairs. Dear me! I begin to think I must have been a very depraved character all my life, and I fear my pulse

must be so flat by this time that it is scarcely worth mentioning. And yet I can call to mind not a few pleasurable experiences that have taken place in which the Cigarette played no unimportant part.

Let me light a fresh cigarette, and as the cerulean smoke curls up let me see if I cannot recall a few of them. A capital dinner in the dear old Temple, an admirable host and four guests. The *menu* perfect, the guests selected with as much care and regard to harmony as the banquet. Clear turtle soup, turbot, rump steak, grouse, Vanilla jelly, and bloaters on toast. Wines: sherry, Madeira, champagne, claret, and port—all of notable vintages. The talk was as good round the table as the viands were on it. The whole thing was a refinement of the celebrated dinners that Original Walker used to give in this same locality many years ago. I do not know if it is recorded that Mr. Walker and his friends smoked after dinner. We most certainly did; and I have a most pleasurable recollection of lighting a cigarette, gazing from the open window across the Thames on that superb moonlight night and wondering at the picturesqueness, the beauty, the charm of light and colour with which our workaday, dirty, matter-of-fact London became invested.

Another instance. Coming down the Thames in my canoe. I have been paddling about the

backwaters; backwaters which I have known from my youth up. I have been going backwards and forwards round tiny eyots and getting aground in the shallows over and over again. The sun is somewhat powerful and I am becoming warm; I run out into the main stream again and I drift once more in the broiling sunshine; I begin to be apprehensive of sunstroke. I am many a mile from my destination, and a long way from any riverside tavern. At last I espy a well-known corner where there are gigantic chesnut-trees, whose branches overhang the river and whose leaves droop in the stream. I know from long experience exactly the way to steer into this port, and with two or three strokes of my paddle I run in and find myself in a cool bower, entirely screened from observation and sunshine. Just the place of all others for a cigarette. And how soothing it was to watch the long threads of vivid blue vapour against the bright green of the sun-illumined leaves, to list to the swirl of the stream, the rustle of the leaves and the hum of the dragon-fly.

And yet one more. A fine old mansion up in the North, said to be the oldest in the county, with innumerable legends and a good private ghost attached to it. It has a fine old garden of a rare old-fashioned sort, pleasant seats, high box borders, trim lawns, and gigantic sycamores. It is tremendously hot, too hot to speak, almost too hot to

think. It is after luncheon; most of the guests have disappeared. Some, I believe, are taking cold baths, others are gone to bed. I have rolled into the hammock, slung beneath the sycamore. It is slung so low that if I rolled out it would not much matter. I should only roll out on the soft turf, and I am quite certain I should have no energy to roll in again. I have a soft cushion, so placed that my head is comfortably elevated. A charming little damsel, who always looks cool, so light and diaphanous are her draperies, is seated on a lounging-chair hard by, and is reading, with a sweet voice and admirable intonation, extracts from my favourite poet. If Mr. Favourite Poet could only see this scene he would immortalize us. I am enjoying "hammockuity" to my heart's content. I swing almost imperceptibly, and the rustle of the leaves and the distant roar of the Lune seem to keep time to the clear cadences of the reader. I have a cigarette in my mouth, but I have no light. There are some matches on the table. I cannot possibly take the trouble to get them. But I gaze plaintively in their direction. The fair reader seems to divine my wish; she gets the box, she strikes a match and lights my cigarette. O winsome watchet eyes, O fair hair, O pouting lips! If the *Lancet* had only taken a "pulse-tracing" then of this "subject," I think it would have been mightily astonished.

WINDOWS.

The tax on windows was probably the most iniquitous ever levied in the present day. One can scarcely believe that it ever existed in a civilized country. You might as well put an impost upon a man's eyes, and make him pay a large sum annually for being allowed to walk about with them wide open. Fancy people being seen with such inscriptions as the following round their hats: "Licensed to see with half an eye." "Licensed to have one eye open," or "Licensed to look with both eyes." This would be ridiculous; and yet it is scarcely more so than making a man pay for the privilege of letting light into his room. For, after all, windows are the eyes of the house; and the larger they are, the clearer they are, the more open they are, so much the better for the house. They are undoubtedly the cheapest form of mural decoration. Pictures, however good or however valuable, you are apt to get tired of; you cannot, however rich you may be, be always getting fresh ones, nor can you constitute yourself a hanging

committee and be changing their situations every week.

Do you know what it is to quarrel with a picture, after having been on the best of terms with it for years? I do. I have sometimes, for no decent reason, suddenly looked on an inoffensive engraving that has hung on my walls for years, and have taken a violent antipathy to it. I have hated it with a bitter hatred, and I have looked upon its hanging where it does in the light of a studied insult to myself. I have growled at it; I have threatened it; I have shaken my fist at it; and have finally had it removed from my sight.

Much cheaper and better than anything else for mural decoration are windows. And yet care must be taken in their situation; there must not be too many of them, or they detract from the value of the picture that each one gives. The man who converts his dining-room into a miniature Crystal Palace makes a terrible mistake, and by this means neutralizes all the advantages he might obtain from a moderate number of windows. Too many windows are quite as bad as too many pictures. To live in a conservatory is quite as bad as perpetual residence in a picture-gallery. As you require something more than the frame to give value to a picture, so it is necessary that there should be something over and above the sash to increase your appreciation of a window.

Very large windows—that is to say windows with enormous panes of glass—I consider to be a mistake. They give too large a field for observation. Your gaze is not sufficiently concentrated to enable you to get, so to speak, the full value for your money. Another thing which is against large windows is that they are difficult to manipulate; they are very heavy, and notwithstanding the strong lines and enormous counterpoises with which they are furnished, they are by no means easy to move. You have to tug at ropes and handles, you have to call in the assistance of a servant, you get red in the face, your temporal arteries swell into tight cords, you lose your temper, and you possibly make use of forcible expressions. Added to this, the enormous weight of the whole affair, and the constant friction, are often too much for the strongest and most tightly twisted of clock-line, and not infrequently, without a moment's warning, the whole thing comes down with a run. I knew a man who once nearly had his head cut off by such a casualty. Fancy being guillotined by your own dining-room window. Surely that would be too ignominious a death.

No, no; the very essence of windowry is moderate-sized panes and ease in their manipulation. You should be able to open a window just as easily as winking your eye. In some of the well-built, substantial, old-fashioned houses in and

about Russell Square—which were erected long before gigantic frames were thought of—this condition is clearly understood, and the windows are so accurately planned, so cleverly hung, and so evenly balanced, that a child can well-nigh open them with one hand. It is not so in the houses of my friend Buggins the Builder. No; Buggins's windows are of a very different kind. He uses unseasoned wood, his sashes never fit, his fastenings generally break, he has box-cord for lines, and rusty old iron for counterpoises. Most of Buggins's windows suffer from a chronic ophthalmia which is exceedingly distressing to their owners.

In connection with this matter I would say a few words as regards blinds, for they are clearly a part and parcel of all windowhood. Possibly the best kind of blind is the old roller blind, provided the halyard never gets slack or off the pulley, and you are able to make all taut with that elaborate brass ratchet-work. There is no exertion required, and you can work it almost as easily as you can your own eyelid. If the window is the eye of the house, clearly the blind is the eyelid of the window. Spring blinds I abominate; there is a briskness, a self-sufficiency, a noise, a blatant, shoddycratic assumption of importance about them that is disgusting. They not only go up with a bang that frightens you out of your wits, but they let a sudden flood of light in that half blinds you. You feel

just as though some one had given you a violent and unexpected smack in the eye.

As for Venetian blinds, I will have none of them. If you have any other occupation in life you must not be troubled with them : if you cannot give your whole attention to their management, if you are unable to devote all your days to the study of their manners and customs, you had better leave them alone. If you have not been brought up to Venetian blinds, I would not advise you to take to them late in life. If you wish to do your worst enemy a bad turn—I suppose we all of us have worst enemies, and are glad to do them a bad turn—leave him seventeen Venetian blinds in your will, and you will probably drive him to suicide or into a lunatic asylum. He will find, in the first place, that they will not fit any of his windows; then he will discover that they want new "webbing;" then he will find that they want repainting, one or two fresh laths, more cord, and innumerable screws. When he has expended half his fortune and all his temper on this legacy, he will discover that the blinds are a delusion and snare, and they make his life a burden unto him.

The halyard is always getting twisted, and when he wants to turn the blind dark he turns it light. Occasionally something will give way internally, and when he goes to pull up his blind it assumes

an idiotic, one-sided, fan-like form, which causes small boys passing by in the street to stop and jeer at him. As for the cord of many knots, which is supposed to regulate the whole machinery, that becomes endued with a most irritating power. The knots are never in the right place required for the height of the blind. He is always making fresh knots, which some one else is everlastingly altering, and some day when he pulls the blind up with a violent jerk the much-worn, long-tried screws in the window-frame will give way, and he pulls the whole thing down on his head. After all this blind is a humbug. The very name "Venetian" blind is a misnomer. I know Venice pretty well, and from one end of it to the other I have seen no specimen of the Venetian blind, as we understand it. My greatest disappointment on my first visit to the Bride of the Adriatic was not seeing the Venetian blind in all its native glory. I looked to seeing it more green-painty, more knotty-corded, more noisy, more aggravating, and more eccentric than ever; but I could not find a single specimen of it anywhere.

I thought I had quite done with blinds, but I cannot help alluding to the painted, transparent blind, which, as a work of art, I thought very highly of in the days of my youth. Those brilliantly coloured but impossible landscapes, those improbable cows, those unlikely shepherds and country

maidens impressed me not a little. I can call to mind a blind-maker who, after dark, used to exhibit one of these works of art in his window, strongly illuminated from the back. Coming home of a winter afternoon, I can recollect a certain old nurse was usually persuaded to take certain children round by the blind-makers; and they used to enjoy prodigiously the exhibition. A new blind was a great event—far more important to me than has been the production of a new piece at the theatre in later years. We thoroughly believed in our blind-painter; we thought him even before the subtle artist who contrived the dissolving views at the Royal Polytechnic Institution. *Our* man was so daring. The glorious streaks of chrome, the violent dashes of vermilion, the emerald foliage, the unconventional cattle, bespoke the courageous disregard of all laws of nature and art, which indicates true genius. I remember an attempt to follow in the same line with a shilling box of water-colours, a sheet from the baby's bed, illuminated by a couple of candles in the nursery, ended in a conflagration, dire failure, and disgrace.

Yet another specimen of the blind race will I—— But no; this is too much. I start to write upon "Windows," and I turn my paper into an Asylum for the Blind. It is as bad as the professor who intended to give a lecture on astronomy, and when he had talked for more than an hour, found he had

only gone as far as the description of a new kind of telescope stand. "I wish that man would clean his windows and go on," I think I hear some of my readers say. Patience, my dear sir, or my dear madam, as the case may be. If you do not take care, I will deliver a long dissertation on the question of window-cleaning, for there is a great deal to be said on the subject. I will rehearse to you the details of Sir Charles Burrell's bill for the protection of housemaids. I will describe to you the "bridge" used by house-painters for window-cleaning. I will chatter concerning the method of window-cleansing by syringe, as practised at the seaside. I will tell you, if windows are cleaned by contract, how many panes are annually broken in the operation. I will give you elaborate disquisitions on semi-transparent windows, on coloured glass, ground glass, the simulation of ground glass by means of putty dabbing, white-washed panes, trellised glass, fluted glass, corrugated glass, bull's-eye glass, and the bottle-kick glass—as it has been irreverently termed—which used to be held in such high esteem by the late Mr. Pugin. But why should I go into these matters? I meant simply to have shown you a series of pictures, but I have been giving you a lecture on the mechanism of windows. However, it is not too late. I have still some space left. Here is my first window, if you care to look through it.

A deep bay showing the enormous thickness of the walls. Massive window-sashes of a later date than the house itself. A perfect bank of the most lovely early autumn flowers on a rustic stand, over which you look through the open window. What do you see? A smoothly shaven lawn, awaiting the tennisonians but they come not. A big, shaggy Russian dog, who answers to the name of Utchika, is lazily trying to bite a mallet in two, and is languidly growling over the performance. One or two racquets are lying about. There are a couple of lounging-chairs, with shawls and books on them, and there is a girl's straw hat under the sycamore. The rooks are solemnly cawing in the ancient elms, and the rush and ripple of the river may be heard, mixed with the occasional rustle of the foliage. It is tremendously hot. It is too hot for work, and the deserted tennis-lawn shows it is far too hot for play. Beneath the shade of the elms do I see a damsel practising "hammockuity" to her heart's content. I cannot see her face, as it is obscured by a book she pretends to be reading, but I can see a torrent of fair hair and a shapely little hand. I can also see protruding from the end of the hammock one of the neatest little feet in the world. There is another lazy little girl, dreaming in the swing, fanning herself with some huge chesnut leaves and giving a languid jerk with her feet now and then to make the swing keep time to a

lazy little song she is singing. I hear voices beneath the verandah to the right. I can smell the odour of tobacco and hear the clink of glasses. I see that Utchika vainly glances in that direction and wags his tail. I am in the easiest of easy chairs. I have somewhat to say to the Houri of the Hammock. I would hold converse with the Syren of the Swing. I would fain fetch a cigarette and plunge my head into a tankard of something iced, but it is too hot to move. What better thing can I do than to remain here and gaze out of window at this pretty picture?

"Tell us another!" as children say directly you have finished a story. Give you another window? Yes, certainly; here it is. Summer night; the window is wide open. I am smoking a pipe in the Wizard's Cave. He is working some mysterious spell that he calls "correcting a proof." "Only two minutes, my boy," says he, "and I shall be ready. Look out of window and amuse yourself!" And he begins to warble to himself,

> "Fol-de-rol, fol-de-rol, fol-de-rol—liety,
> Spells I am working in endless variety."

I do his bidding. I look out of window, and most assuredly the Wizard *has* worked a spell. A more charming picture it is impossible to see. The night is clear, the moon is aglint on the water. You can trace the Embankment by its row of lights; and you notice hansoms tearing along, their

lamps looking like glow-worms with a railway education. You see the green and red lights of the Charing Cross Station; you see the illuminated clock at the Houses of Parliament. The two shot-towers to the left; also portions of Somerset House, the Middle Temple Library, and Saint Paul's Cathedral; Waterloo Bridge, with its line of lamps; the glow of some of the flaring thoroughfares on the Surrey side. You note, too, the black shadows of buildings on the opposite side; you see an occasional brightly-lighted window in the shade, and wonder what it is, and who can be there, and what he can be doing at this time of night. You notice a panting little tug snorting up the river in a furtive, underhand sort of way, with a string of barges following. You wonder if they are powder-boats, and you think what a scene there would be if one of the bargees were to inadvertently strike a vesuvian. How the whole of this fairy-like picture would disappear, and how a more sudden and complete transformation scene would take place than even the Wizard himself had ever imagined. How well London comes out by night!—how the poverty of our architecture is lost sight of in the moonlight! I protest I have seldom seen anything finer than the view from the window of the Wizard. I am lost in admiration. At last I find myself tapped on the shoulder by the Wizard, who says Mrs. Wizard has been speaking to me thrice, and I have paid no

attention. I turn round; I make profuse apologies; I find sundry other pupils and an Irish fairy have arrived. The fairies devote themselves to witchery. We gather round a cauldron, and work spells, and burn incense. We sing

> "Fol-de-rol, lol-de-rol, lol-de-rol—liety.
> Jolly indeed is the Wizard's society."

I can tell you no more!

Can tell you no more? I could, but I spare you. Twenty windows at least I would have given you in the present paper, but I did not get anywhere near them until two-thirds of my space was gone. Windows looking on back gardens in London, on narrow water streets in Venice, on quiet nooks in old cathedral towns; windows in City taverns, in Thames hotels, in seaside lodgings, in P. and O. steamers, in Brighton flys, in hansom cabs, in Dutch barges, in Swiss chalets, in Breton farmhouses, in lumbering diligences, in City churches, in bankers', in photographers', in railway-carriages, in clubs, in—

But hold! Mr. George Augustus Sala has said in his ever-amusing "Echoes" in the *Illustrated London News* that the Present Writer "once modestly observed that he made no pretension to genius or erudition, but that he would back himself to look out of window on a rainy day against any man in England." If this be a fact—and Mr. Sala is generally correct in all his statements—my readers will be delighted to find my pen refuses to write any further.

about Russell Square—which were erected long before gigantic frames were thought of—this condition is clearly understood, and the windows are so accurately planned, so cleverly hung, and so evenly balanced, that a child can well-nigh open them with one hand. It is not so in the houses of my friend Buggins the Builder. No; Buggins's windows are of a very different kind. He uses unseasoned wood, his sashes never fit, his fastenings generally break, he has box-cord for lines, and rusty old iron for counterpoises. Most of Buggins's windows suffer from a chronic ophthalmia which is exceedingly distressing to their owners.

In connection with this matter I would say a few words as regards blinds, for they are clearly a part and parcel of all windowhood. Possibly the best kind of blind is the old roller blind, provided the halyard never gets slack or off the pulley, and you are able to make all taut with that elaborate brass ratchet-work. There is no exertion required, and you can work it almost as easily as you can your own eyelid. If the window is the eye of the house, clearly the blind is the eyelid of the window. Spring blinds I abominate; there is a briskness, a self-sufficiency, a noise, a blatant, shoddycratic assumption of importance about them that is disgusting. They not only go up with a bang that frightens you out of your wits, but they let a sudden flood of light in that half blinds you. You feel

just as though some one had given you a violent and unexpected smack in the eye.

As for Venetian blinds, I will have none of them. If you have any other occupation in life you must not be troubled with them : if you cannot give your whole attention to their management, if you are unable to devote all your days to the study of their manners and customs, you had better leave them alone. If you have not been brought up to Venetian blinds, I would not advise you to take to them late in life. If you wish to do your worst enemy a bad turn—I suppose we all of us have worst enemies, and are glad to do them a bad turn—leave him seventeen Venetian blinds in your will, and you will probably drive him to suicide or into a lunatic asylum. He will find, in the first place, that they will not fit any of his windows; then he will discover that they want new "webbing;" then he will find that they want repainting, one or two fresh laths, more cord, and innumerable screws. When he has expended half his fortune and all his temper on this legacy, he will discover that the blinds are a delusion and snare, and they make his life a burden unto him.

The halyard is always getting twisted, and when he wants to turn the blind dark he turns it light. Occasionally something will give way internally, and when he goes to pull up his blind it assumes

From a Photograph by W. W. Rouch & Co.

THE HAUNTED PRECINCT.

(*See Page 197.*)

[illegible]

[illegible] pages [illegible]

[illegible] straight [illegible]

[illegible] and Herbe[illegible]

[illegible] in Bari[illegible]

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thumping [illegible]

I have gazed [illegible]

I have seen the [illegible]

shore, shuddering. I have noted the coal-fires

[illegible] on the river "being carried away [illegible]

[illegible] wind like red-hot splashes in the [illegible]

[illegible] did many years agone. Late [illegible]

[illegible] on a wet, wild, windy nigh[illegible]

[illegible] range fascination in gazing [illegible]

[illegible] over the glistening [illegible]

From a Photograph by [illegible]

THE HAUNTED PRECINCT.

The window at which I am now writing—where I have written many more pages and columns than I care to recollect—looks straight across to the chambers occupied by Pip and Herbert Pocket, after they forsook their old rooms in Barnard's Inn. My rooms are quite as ancient, and quite as ramshackle as Pip's were. I hear the wind howling round the place, and the rain pattering against the windows; I can fancy myself in a storm-beaten lighthouse, I have the smoke come rolling down the chimney, just as Pip did when he lived over the way. I have often listened to the wild rattling of the ill-fitting window-sashes, to the mysterious thumping and groaning on my ancient staircase. I have gazed out into the dark, wild, wet night, and I have seen the lamps on the bridge and the shore, shuddering. I have noted the coal-fires on barges on the river "being carried away before the wind like red-hot splashes in the rain," just as Pip did many years agone. Late at night—especially on a wet, wild, windy night—I have found a strange fascination in gazing across the greensward, over the glistening pavement, and

keeping my attention rivetted to the doorway leading to Pip's staircase, and to the dim light that I see flickering in Pip's chambers. Often and often have I fancied I have seen Magwitch steal in at that doorway, and imagined I saw Old Orlick slink stealthily after him. When I have seen a change or a movement in the lights in the topmost chambers, I have pictured the meeting between Pip and his patron, and I have subsequently thought of the former groping his way down the dark staircase, and stumbling over the vengeful Orlick crouching in the corner. Being so on the spot, so to speak, the whole scene has sometimes taken such a hold on me, that I would not have descended my own grim staircase that night for fifty thousand pounds, for fear I should find Old Orlick waiting in ambush, to call me "Wolf," to rush upon me and brain me with a stone-hammer.

The other evening I came in very late—no uncommon occurrence with me—and the night-porter gave me a letter that had been left for me at the Fleet Street gate. There was nothing of importance in the letter, but as he held a light for me to read it by, suddenly the whole scene came back to my mind of the note which Wemmick left for Pip, which contained the words, "Don't go home." These words rang in my ears as I took my way down Middle Temple Lane, which is as deserted,

as ill-paved, and as badly lighted as it might have been fifty years ago. I kept on murmuring to myself, "Don't go home;" and if it had not been for the very shame of the thing, I protest I would have turned back and taken a bed at the Tavistock for the night. Weird, silent, ghostly, uncanny, is my grim staircase. I toil slowly up. I stare at the names painted on the sported oaks—I never notice them in the daytime. I wonder how it is Mr. Crumbrush, Mr. Barkin Dave, and Mr. Thomas Timpitt can live in the same chamber without quarrelling. I am annoyed with the gigantic letter-slit on the door of Messrs. Burraby and Ruffem, and find myself wondering whether they use it to post themselves, pantomime fashion, into their chambers when they have forgotten the keys. And here I recollect that Burraby is a stout and dignified personage, and I think how funny he would look if he stuck halfway, and the laundress and the head-porter had to pull him out by the heels in the morning. With all these wild ideas running through my brain, I cannot get rid of the possibility of Orlick crouching behind a balustrade, or in the shadow of a forgotten "oak" that some careless clerk has left unsported. My staircase is Orlick-haunted, there is no doubt.

When I reach the top landing I see a stalwart figure, and I hear a gruff voice. I start. It is not, however, Orlick. It is my trusty policeman. He

wishes me a gruff, but good-natured "Good morning," and asks if there is any news. He sees me often come home in the small hours; he has found out that I am connected with journalism—how he found this out, I do not know—so he imagines I have come direct from a newspaper office, having previously had a confidential interview with the Prime Minister; and he half expects that, at three o'clock in the morning, I shall give him an anticipatory summary of the news that he will buy for a penny in five hours' time. I wish him "Good night"—I hate saying "Good morning" to people when it is dark—and he goes clumping downstairs. I bang to the oak, I slam the inner door, I tumble into bed. The wind howls down the chimney, the window-sashes clatter, the doors rattle as if somebody were trying to break in, the rain patters on the pane like fine shot, I pull the clothes over my head and dream about Orlick. I wake up in a fright, and I come to the conclusion that my chambers are more haunted than ever. I go to sleep again, and when the full morning has arrived, and chimes all round and about are endeavouring to trip one another up with the energy with which they are ringing out the large hours, I am well satisfied that not only my chambers, but the whole precinct of the Temple, from Whitefriars in the east to Essex Street in the west, from Fleet Street in the north to the Em-

bankment in the south, is as thoroughly haunted as the most romantic and imaginative mind could desire. By day and by night is this precinct constantly haunted by a thousand spirits of the old time and the new.

Lights in the second floor of Number Two Brick Court. Sounds of laughter and merriment. Music, more laughter, a song, applause, and more laughter again. You possibly think this is a party of rollicking law students who are celebrating the "call" of one of their number, or what is quite as likely, are comforting an unsuccessful candidate by a carouse. You are quite mistaken in both your suppositions. We have, if you please, drifted back more than a century, and these are the rooms to which Doctor Oliver Goldsmith removed, after he had unexpectedly landed five hundred pounds by the success of "The Good-Natured Man." These are the pleasant chambers that the open-handed little doctor furnished with blue morino-covered mahogany sofas, blue morino curtains, Wilton carpets, and looking-glasses—altogether fitting them up regardless of expense. I am inclined to think, from the uproarious merriment, that the doctor is unbending to-night: that he has, so to speak, taken off his literary pinafore. There is no overbearing, lexicographical party by the name of Johnson here this evening; there is no obsequious Boswell; there is no Reynolds, deaf

and courtly, in maroon velvet; Percy, Bickerstaff, Topham Beauclere, Edmund Burke, Kelly, and Macklin are conspicuous by their absence. Goldie has quite forgotten that he is a great man, and is enjoying himself tremendously. A lot of his Irish friends are here to-night; there are the Seguins, the Pollards, and a host of others, who are being entertained right royally.

Look at the kindly host. How bravely he is arrayed in his Tyrian-blue satin-grained coat, his garter-blue silk breeches, his marvellous embroidered waistcoat (for all of which I am afraid Mr. William Filby will suffer). See how attentive he is to those two bright-eyed laughing girls in the corner of the room. How the blue-eyed one bandages his eyes—she does not blind him at all—for blindman's-buff, and how the doctor takes his revenge when he catches her! What fun they have over a game of forfeits, and what a glorious, prodigal, rollicking supper they have afterwards! A rubber at whist is proposed subsequently, but every one is much too merry to take part in it. Over a bowl of punch the dear little doctor is induced to sing "Johnny Armstrong" and the "Three Jolly Pigeons." Then the blue-eyed one sings a song, and the doctor insists on toasting her. "Why not have a dance?" says some one. But then it is recollected that they have no music, and that the doctor cannot play the flute and dance

at the same time. Mr. Seguin comes to the rescue; he hums the first few bars of a minuet then very popular, and several other good voices join him. The doctor and Mrs. Seguin step through the measure with a mock courtly grace which is irresistible. Presently Seguin, who has a rare vein of sly humour about him, changes the air to an Irish jig, and the pair foot it right blithely, accompanying it with the yelps indispensable to such a performance. At last the doctor becomes almost wild with excitement, whirls his wig up to the ceiling, and sinks exhausted in an arm-chair. The company then begin to be conscious of a prolonged knocking underneath. At first this is supposed to be applause, but it is continued in such a very angry and staccato fashion, that the host winks and points downwards with his thumb, and explains there is a rising young barrister, occupied on a somewhat abstruse work on law, residing beneath; and this is Mr. Blackstone's way of intimating that he cannot get on with his "Commentaries" satisfactorily if they continue to kick up that tremendous row. Some people are so very unreasonable. I once knew a man who objected to the "Plantation Breakdown" and "Hop Light Loo" over his head at three in the morning, because he wanted to study "Fearne on Contingent Remainders."

Middle Temple Lane by daylight is a pleasanter

place than by night, although it is quite as much haunted. Though the Temple Stairs, with their wherries and watermen, have long since dissolved into the limbo of the past, the lane has still all the old peculiarities of a thoroughfare leading to the water. It has quite the most ancient look of any part of the Temple, especially if you raise your hand and shut out from view the new gateway. The nineteenth century costume is quite out of harmony with the background; and those young ladies in otter and sealskin, those damsels in homespun ulsterettes, those big babies in short skirts, black stockings, and snowy frills, you met going down to see the chrysanthemums just now, though very charming in their way, rather mar the picture from an artistic point of view.

It would be much more agreeable—from a strictly pictorial point of view, mind you—if one saw the full-skirted coats, the long embroidered waistcoats, the ruffles, the swords, and the flowing wigs of Mr. Spectator and his friend Sir Roger de Coverley. Cannot you picture this worthy couple amid the clamouring crowd of watermen? and Sir Roger picking out a waterman with a wooden leg, and saying to his friend in the rounded, somewhat pompous manner of the period: "You must know I never make use of anybody to row me that has not lost neither a leg nor an arm. I would rather

bate him a few strokes with his oar than not employ an honest man that has been wounded in the Queen's service." And do you remember that the Spectator tells us that his friend, "after having seated himself, trimmed the boat with his coachman, who being a very sober man, always serves as ballast on these occasions." Fancy getting a coachman to serve as ballast in the present day! I should like to see the face of anybody's coachman to whom the proposition was made. And supposing the ballast did not happen to be sober, how very awkward it would be.

Old Doctor Johnson, with his unwieldy body, his ill-groomed wig, his faded murrey-coloured coat, shabby with wine-stains, certainly haunts this thoroughfare. I often fancy him toddling down this lane on his way to "The Sycamore," the ruins of which still remain in the gardens of the Inner Temple, where he will sit and thunder forth his opinions, and air his dogmas, and be generally disputatious and disagreeable for hours; where he will be toadied by Boswell and others, who will subsequently invite him to dinner at "The Mitre." When twilight falls there are five black cats, who sit in solemn conclave and make hideous noises at the bottom of the lane. They are said to be the disembodied spirits of five eminent lawyers, who once drove a thriving practice within the Temple. I have heard the names mentioned, but would not

venture to divulge them even if you would make me a Bencher on the spot.

Are you conscious of the scent of tobacco-smoke? Are you critical on tobaccos of the past, and sufficiently versed in fine distinction of odours to recognize Orinooko? If so, follow your nose up a narrow, cross-grained, wrong-headed staircase, much nearer to Fleet Street than Goldsmith's, and on the other side of the way. If you can manage to slip in when the door is open, you will find you have just dropped in at the very best part of the night. There has been whist going on during the evening; subsequently there has been cold roast beef—and how they cut and came again, both the players and the lookers-on, at that excellent joint!—there has been veal-pie, and bread and cheese, and porter. Now there are glasses and bottles on the table, and a ceaseless flow of talk. If your eyes can pierce through the clouds of smoke, you will see a little spare man, dressed in black, sitting at the head of the table. He has dark, curly hair, tinged with grey, his face lights up when he speaks, and he is continually saying something with a slight stammer, as his quick, glittering eyes seem to thoroughly take all the company into his confidence, and invite them to participate in the joke. A fund of quaint fancy and delicate humour gives an infinite charm to all the little man in black has to say.

If I mistake not, there is Mr. Hazlitt just filling

his glass, and Mr. Leigh Hunt has just whispered something to the host that has amused him very much. That enthusiast with white hair, who is talking so volubly, is, I fancy, Mr. Coleridge. The solemn gentleman leaning against the chimney-piece, who spoke just now in such a ponderous voice, looks a good deal like Mr. Wordsworth. I really hope he will not be prevailed upon to recite any of his own poetry. He with the dome-shaped bald head, who has just entered, is, I am inclined to think, no less a personage than Mr. Haydon. He has evidently got some fresh grievance about High Art and the Royal Academy. Yes; and there are lots of other well-known men in the room, but they are talking so much, and the smoke is so thick— What did you say? Who is the host? Did not I tell you? Why that is our gentle Elia, our dear Charles Lamb. A veritable genius of the Temple. He was born in Crown Office Row, and lived there long before he inhabited these chambers. When I come to think of it, he is the only man I ever heard of who was born within the precinct of the Temple. Many people have lived there the greater part of their lives, not a few have died there, but Charles Lamb is the only one I ever heard of as confessing to the Temple as his birthplace.

There are yet some more "haunted chambers" that cause us to linger for a long while in their

neighbourhood. Through a narrow turning, across a paved court, up a dark staircase to the third-floor, and of course you know where you are—Number Six, Lamb Court. If you were to scrape the paint off the lintel of that battered door as carefully as if you were cleaning a Titian, I should not be at all surprised if you came upon the name of "Mr. George Warrington," and under it that of "Mr. Arthur Pendennis." Here, you may recollect, Pen was taken ill; here he was found delirious by Captain Costigan; and here he was faithfully and lovingly nursed by sweet little Fanny Bolton. Here came kind-hearted Doctor Good-enough; and here, subsequently, came Pen's mother, Miss Laura, and the Major. And then poor little Fanny was used somewhat hardly; the loving little creature, who had saved his life with her touching care and devotion, was treated with scorn and contumely when the family came down in all their glory of overpowering respectability. The tender little nurse was turned out of doors when there was no further occasion for her services; and when "the family" were making merry over the convalescence of her hero, a poor pale little girl in a black bonnet used to stand at the lamp-post in Lamb Court, looking up at the windows, listening to the music, and weeping.

Up this staircase, too, if my recollection serves me, came dear old Colonel Newcome and Clive,

came also Pidgeon, came that tiresome Mr. Bows one Sunday evening, came innumerable printer's devils, came Mr. Finucane, came Mrs. Flanagan the laundress, and Morgan the valet. If you descend to the floor below, and proceed to flay the door in a similar fashion to the one you have just now operated upon, I should not be surprised if your labours were rewarded by coming upon the name of "Mr. Percy Sibright," and "Mr. Bangham." It was these gentlemen's chambers, if you remember, that were devoted to Miss Laura's use during Arthur's illness. Here she amused herself with inspecting Mr. Sibright's rows of boots, his museum of scent and pomatum pots, his gallery of female beauty, and his miscellaneous collection of books. Here it was whispered she once read a certain fashionable French novel, and here she positively had the temerity to take Mr. Percy's wig out of the box, place it over her own pretty locks, and laughingly gaze at herself in the glass. It would be difficult to find any part of the Temple more pleasantly haunted than this dingy old staircase.

A mellow light, a subdued hum of conversation, in some chambers on the first floor within earshot of the fountain, irresistibly recalls to my mind a marvellous dinner which Mr. "Original" Walker talks of having given once upon a time in the Temple. The dinner was marvellous in respect of being simple and, in its way, perfect. He tells us

he began with spring soup from Birch's in Cornhill, then a moderate-sized turbot, with excellent lobster-sauce, cucumber, and new potatoes. This was followed by ribs of beef from Leadenhall Market, roasted to a turn and smoking hot from the spit, French beans, and salad. Then came a dressed crab, and finally some jelly. The dessert was oranges and biscuits, with "occasional introductions" of anchovy toast; and the wines were champagne, port, and claret. The number who sat down were six; they were all of great experience as diners-out, and professed to be absolutely charmed with the banquet. The great charm of the whole affair was not only its absence of ostentation, but everything being of the best quality, and the cooking perfection. He speaks of the cooking having been done by a Temple laundress, and the admirable way in which it was accomplished. I fear laundresses must have deteriorated very much since Mr. Original Walker's time, and I think there are but very few within the precinct who could accomplish any triumph of culinary art in the present day.

Another thing with regard to this dinner was, that the guests were chosen with as much care and with as much thought for harmony as the food and the drink. A most important fact which most dinner-givers overlook. His idea of an invitation was excellent. He said he should issue it thus:

"Can you dine with me to-morrow? I shall have herrings, hashed mutton, and cranberry tart. My fishmonger sends me word herrings are just now in perfection, and I have some delicious mutton, in hashing which I shall direct my cook to exercise all her art. I intend the party not to exceed six, and observe, we shall sit down to dinner at half-past seven. I am asking as follows—." This invitation is, in its way, perfect. You know what you are going to eat, and whom you are going to meet, and you can accept or decline, as seems good unto you. Nowadays, you never know what you are going to have for dinner; and the chances are you may find yourself seated with your bitterest enemy on one side, and the greatest bore in London on the other. I must not trust myself to say much about Temple banquets. I could tell you of a wonderful Christmas party that Jack Coniston and his wife gave, long before he came into his property and they moved to Onslow Square; I could tell you of a certain bachelor who was invaded one afternoon by an army of sisters and cousins, who clamoured for afternoon tea; and I could write you a poem concerning a wonderful steak and floury potatoes, perfectly cooked by one of the prettiest girls you could wish to behold at her brother's chambers one day, when I dropped in unexpectedly to luncheon. I recollect we all went to see "Ours" at the Prince of Wales's in the

evening, and laughed tremendously over the famous pudding-making scene.

There is one especial set of rooms over in King's Bench Walk that is haunted with a thousand and one pleasant recollections. Here dwelt one of my dearest friends, and here have we often sat and talked and laughed into the small hours. I could tell of a many pleasant evenings, and not a few makeshift bohemian dinners. We were a merry crew in those days; the cabmen knew those chambers better than any in the Temple; the policeman knew them, for he had the pleasure of drinking the proprietor's health not a few times; so did Prosser's men; so did the expert waiters from The Rainbow; so did the active and intelligent gentlemen in white aprons, who looked like retired bankers, or unfrocked rural deans with a taste for sporting. If I began to write the history of these chambers I should have no room for anything else; so with countless joyous reminiscences jostling one another and clamouring to be chronicled, I will pick out one which seems to me to be especially charming. It was in the middle of June, after the opera. I forget what the opera was, but it was a long one, and it was over late. We had difficulty in getting cabs, but we had all determined to go down to King's Bench Walk to supper. Some, I believe, walked down; three or four cabs discharged their cargoes at the Inner Temple Gate;

and the night-porter was considerably astonished—it takes a good deal to astonish a Temple porter, I can tell you—at the apparition of ladies in light dresses and without bonnets, gentlemen in evening dress, trooping through the gateway.

It was great fun, and the newly-married couple who came to play propriety enjoyed the affair as much as anybody. How the corks popped, how musical was the laughter, and how quickly the time sped away! There were some good songs sung that night, and there is a sweet voice that carolled an exquisite ballad in a minor key that even now comes back and haunts me in dreams. At last some one says it is getting light. I have seen the blinds getting bluer and bluer for the last half-hour. The blinds are drawn up, the windows are thrown open, the fresh air is wafted in, bringing with it a scent of lilac and new-mown hay. The sun is rising; we can see its reflection in the barely cold lamps on Waterloo Bridge, its gleams on the Embankment, and its glow on the grand old river. The sparrows are just beginning to twitter, and every moment the grey of dawn is giving way before the rose of sunrise. It is indescribably beautiful. At last we break up. There is hunting for wraps and shawls. I find my gibus, and get away first, for I am somewhat sad at heart. When I get outside, I hear my name called, I look up, and see the belle of the

evening leaning out of the window, and looking, in the sweet morning light, just like a picture by Leslie. I see she plucks something from her hair and flings it down. A rose falls at my feet. I pick it up, and hear a sweet musical laugh. I hear a voice singing, "Dreaming by night, dreaming by day." So clear is the morning and so still that I can hear this right across the Temple till I turn into my own rooms. I can scarcely tell whether the effect is tenderly sorrowful or touchingly sweet; perhaps it is a little of both. "Ah, my brethren!" I say aloud, to the great astonishment of a policeman, who stands blinking in the sunshine; "we are all dreaming by day as well as by night, and so it will continue to the end of the chapter."

There is, after all, no part of the Haunted Precinct so pleasantly haunted as that of Fountain Court. It is haunted in the day, in the sweet summer time, in the brilliant sunshine, when the leaves are greenest and the breezes are softest, when the musical plash of the fountain and the whispered rustle of the ancient elms are mingled with the subdued roar from the Strand. Do you not recollect how years agone "merrily the fountain leaped and danced, and merrily the smiling dimples twinkled and expanded more and more, until they broke into a laugh against the basin's rim and vanished?" Do you not recollect

this? Of course you do. Here came honest simple-minded Tom Pinch, on his way to his occupation of arranging and cataloguing a library in those mysterious chambers, and here would come his sweet little sister Ruth to meet him when his day's work was done. Here came courteous John Westlock by the merest chance, quite by accident. Here he met, also by the merest chance and quite by accident, Miss Ruth Pinch alone one day. And here—but of course every one knows of that sweet little bit of love-making, so skilfully drawn, so delicately touched, and so admirably pictured, with the sweet musical accompaniment of the plashing fountain. I never pass through the court but I think of this tender little idyll.

Fountain Court is not so quaint, so umbrageous, so behind the age, as it was ten years ago. They have cut down trees, they have removed some particularly picturesque and curved steps, they have abolished the ancient railings, and they have given a spick and span, somewhat tea-gardening aspect to the place. The Benchers have done all this and a great deal more; but they cannot plane out of existence the pleasant reminiscences of this quaint little corner. Notwithstanding all the alterations and innovations by that modern demon Improvement, the Temple fountain still babbles pleasantly of the good old days of long ago, it

still sparkles in the sunshine, and its surroundings are still haunted by the gentle spirit of sweet little Ruth.

The Temple Gardens have been so much altered these last few years; so many shrubs have been uprooted; there has been such a straightening of paths, and such a removal of quaint seats and odd corners; that by daylight the spirits of the old time delight not to lounge in this pleasaunce as of yore. If, however, you are able to wander there after dark—as I have done many a time—you will find that the mantle of the night casts a rare halo of romance around the old gardens. One might almost then call back the days when the Temple Gardens were a fashionable promenade in the evening; when the leading counsel used to walk up and down by the side of the Thames; when cocked hats, ruffles, satin breeches, and silk stockings were worn; when there would be peals of laughter following the good things said by the stumpy little Lord Erskine; when there was a joviality, a heartiness, a good-fellowship among the profession for which we vainly search in the present day. Drifting in imagination farther back, drifting back more than two centuries, we find that the hilarity and conviviality of the Templars was of the most unbounded description. Evelyn, who was elected one of the comptrollers of the revels of the Middle Temple, thus wrote: "Went to see

the revelles at the Middle Temple, which is an old, but riotous custom, and hath relation neither to virtue or policy." Probably he would think just the same with regard to a call-party in the present day.

In the days of Queen Anne there was a rookery, a great glory to these gardens, which was organized by Sir Edward Northey. Leigh Hunt comments upon the fitness of this establishment. He says: "The rook is a grave legal bird, both in his coat and habits, living in communities, yet to himself, and strongly addicted to discussions of meum and tuum." Not long ago I saw two grave old rooks, one with a white feather, strutting about the lawn, swinging in the trees under King's Bench Walk, and cawing and shaking their heads very ominously. Possibly they thought, as there is a rage just now for Queen Anne architecture and Queen Anne furniture, there might be an opening for a well-organized Queen Anne rookery. I saw these two old birds in grave consultation one or two mornings; since then they have disappeared altogether. I suppose they could not make any satisfactory arrangements, and were unable to float the company after all. Anyway, the sparrows have had it all to themselves ever since, and the Temple sparrows, I should tell you, are the most friendly, the most impudent, and the plumpest birds of their kind you ever saw. Why the Benchers of the

Lamb and Flag, and their brethren of the Winged Horse, do not make sparrow-pudding one of their great dishes on high days and holidays, I fail to understand.

And, after all, I am inclined to think that the chambers in which I am now writing are possibly quite as much haunted as any part I have been talking about. So closely are they haunted, so thickly are they peopled with spirits of past pleasures, so densely are they filled with the ghosts of dead banquets: such an echo of past laughter, such a ring of bygone song still clings to them, that it is difficult to say whether pleasure or pain would predominate in its chronicle. And what pen could chronicle it? And would it be worth while to chronicle it if it could? Who shall tell of the brave boys who have trolled out the merry song beneath this roof-tree? Who can tell of the good men and true who have belaboured the oak? Who can remember half the good stories that have been told as the smoke wreathed up and the fun was kept going till the small hours were getting larger, and till the "accusing splendour of the morn" sent the goodly company laughing down the grim old staircase? Is the world changed? Is there no more fun, laughter, truth, and good fellowship? A former proprietor of these rooms, many years ago, used to wear a pigtail, and dressed in a sage-green coat and black silk small-clothes;

From a Photograph by Samuel A. Walker.

THE AUTHOR'S DEN.

(*See Page 219.*)

From a Photograph by Samuel A. Walker.

THE AUTHOR'S DEN.

(See Page 100.)

he was a great connoisseur in port wine, and might be seen passing sometimes from the adjoining chambers, where he had his cellar, with a fine old cobwebby bottle, carefully nursed in a basket. People say this phantom may be occasionally seen on my landing in the present day. I confess I have never seen it. My chambers are, nevertheless, haunted. How? Well, it was at one of those chrysanthemum luncheons that bachelors are expected to give from time to time. She was among the company. I can see her now; the sweetest little Gainsborough face you could wish to behold —fathomless brown eyes that seemed the essence of truth. How charming she looked in her dark velveteen, her otterskin jacket, and her quaint little hat! Her chaperon, a charming married woman, behaved admirably; for they stayed long after luncheon, till the twilight was deepening, till the fire was burning red, till gloom gave a glory to glow. And then? Ah, well! it is a long tale, and I daresay will not interest you. I have half a dozen portraits of her in that drawer; that clever water-colour landscape on the wall is her work; there is the old piano which she laughed at for being so "tin-kettly," but from which, nevertheless, she managed to evoke an excellent accompaniment to a sweet song; there is the sketch by John Leech that amused her so much; there is the ancient chair she sat in, the carved cabinet she

admired, and the Venetian mirror that reflected her pretty face. And here is the old room, with its prints, pictures, curios, and rubbish, looking much the same as it ever did. But the pretty girl, with the Gainsborough face and the fathomless brown eyes, where is she?

I have been writing till I am tired. I pull up the blind and look out to see what sort of a night it is. It is still wild and wet; the wind is blowing in angry gusts, and the rain is beating in angry spirts against the panes, the pavement is wet and glistening, the lamps are flickering, the window-frames are chattering, and the whole place is creaking and banging and hammering like a ship in a storm! There is a faint light in Pip's chambers, but there is no one below on the pavement or going in at the entrance. The night is too wet even for Magwitch or for Old Orlick. I pull down the blind, and dismiss them from my imagination. I drop my pen, and sit down by the dying fire, thinking somewhat sadly that my own chambers are more effectually haunted than any other portion of the Haunted Precinct.

A FIRELIGHT SONATA.

A "Firelight Sonata"? Yes; and why not, pray? We have the "Moonlight Sonata," and to my way of thinking, the former is much better adapted as a *motivo* for a musical composition than the latter. There is infinitely more variety, more contrast, more colour, and, to my way of thinking, the opportunities for orchestral arrangement are infinite. As I sit here and watch the shadows flicker on the ceiling I plan the entire business; the whole thing is scored in my mind. I arrange dainty little portions for the oboe, a quaint movement for stringed instruments, a piccolo and triangle duet, a charming passage for the bassoon, a striking composition for four harps, and a most original arrangement for three muffled French horns, a suppressed ophicleide, a timorous trombone, and a cautious kettledrum. Do I not see a lovely melody in a minor key suggested by that impertinent little gas-jet, which has just begun to scream so merrily? I think that would do for a couple of clarionets, and the rattle of the carriages outside might be gently indicated by a sort of

"rum-tum" accompaniment on the double bass. Dear me! that is not at all a musicianly term, a "rum-tum" accompaniment. This comes of writing on subjects one knows very little about.

Indeed, I have come to the conclusion that I am not much of a musician. Be that as it may, I am continually composing the most lovely music —waltzes, marches, symphonies, and ballads; but they are lost to the world, because I cannot put them down. If I only had a secretary always following me about with a sheet of music-paper; or if I had a musical ghost—I am told there are musical, pictorial, and literary ghosts as well as sculptorial—*how* I would astonish the world with my compositions! As I do not happen to keep a ghost, these great works will probably never be known to the world. My "Firelight Sonata" will probably never be performed at the Albert Hall. But it is a pity the notion should be lost sight of, and I commend the idea to my excellent friends, Sir Arthur Sullivan and Mr. Frederic Clay, when the demand for sparkling comic opera and graceful ballad shall give them a little leisure to turn their attention to this great work.

But how came I to think of the "Firelight Sonata" at all? Well, just because I happened to sit down by the fire, in my easy-chair, at what I

consider the pleasantest part of the day, at this period of the year, in London: that is when it is too dark to see to read or write, and it is not quite dark enough to light the gas and draw the curtains. It has been a busy day with me—we travellers in literary small-ware are very hard worked sometimes, and a number of pressing orders have come in from certain great firms which were obliged to be executed without delay. I have been driving my trusty Gillott at extra speed from eleven this morning, and now it is well-nigh five. My brain is somewhat weary, and my pen is well-nigh worn out; it jibs, it sticks one nib in the paper and refuses to proceed. I think both myself and pen have earned some rest. So I light a cigarette, put my feet on the fender, and watch the blue rings curl over my head and lose themselves in the deepening gloom.

The street-lamps, which have just been lighted, cast a dappled and uncertain reflection on the ceiling; the cabs clatter through the square from time to time, and the merry tinkle of the muffin-bell resoundeth (I think a "Muffin-Bell Mazourka," arranged for three accordions, a dulcimer, and a tambourine, would be effective for my Great Work), the firelight flashes, "the room is deliciously mellow—weird shadows come fast as they go—the ceiling is chequered and yellow—and gloom gives a glory to glow." A mighty pleasant time to muse

and to meditate. Ah, me! what plans I have made, what projects I have matured, at this hour ever since I can remember. I have been a Fire-worshipper from my youth up, and I find the older one gets the more this *culte* grows upon me. What poems I have imagined, what three-volume novels I have plotted, and what charming comedies I have concocted 'twixt the glow and the gloom! And how they have all subsequently faded in the glare of the garish gaslight!

This dreamy, glowing light—sweet and uncertain as a girl—is, I am told, famous to make love by. Mind, I say *I am told.* I know nothing of such matters myself, but experts in the art have informed me that it is far before even a summer's day on the river, and that the much-vaunted poetical and romantic moonlight is absolutely nothing in comparison to it. It is a pleasant time for callers. But I do not think any will be in this afternoon. At any rate, I shall not have the gas lighted till somebody puts in an appearance. I find one's room—one's own special den—never looks to such advantage as it does in the firelight. All its shortcomings are smoothed over, all the errors you may have made in colour or arrangement are lost sight of, and everything gains in value by the sombre shadows and the fitful flutter of the flame. I declare my copy of "The Jordaens Family"—painted years ago—looks by this light a most superb Old

Master, and my repetition of the "Blue Boy" seems fully equal to the great Thomas Gainsborough himself. What glimpses I get every now and then, as the blaze brightens, of that bonny damsel exquisitely painted by John Phillip's own hand, smiling upon me from the opposite wall. What a superb appearance do the rows of books represent under the present aspect! Quite a young Beckford library, so to speak, and suggestive of rare editions, tall copies, choice illustrations, and superb bindings; whereas, if the truth were really known, there is hardly a scarce book in the whole collection. But how grand, how magnificent they look in the firelight. So does my ancient copper coal-scuttle. It is battered and dented, but gloriously polished. All sorts of odd little reflections, all kinds of tiny glimmerings of light and rosy duplications of the fire's redness, glitter and sparkle within it; it would form a study by itself. Some of my musical friends might possibly care to render it under the title of a "Coal-scuttle Canzonet."

How well, too, does that ancient carved cabinet come out in the uncertain light, how the fire glints upon the floriated ornamentations, and outlines in vermilion the figure of Saint Margaret in the centre panel. And how those old chairs, too, with their faded tapestry, help to form a picture that might serve for the corner of a baronial hall.

I protest I feel proud and quite the baron as I gaze on my possessions, which have become, in this extraordinary way, invested with a fictitious value. Possibly one gets a little dreamy and sleepy in this delicious light. How the portraits seem to wake into life at this time; how their expression seems to change with the flicker of the fire! Here is Besterboys talking to his dog; here is the Skipper with plans for a new house-boat; here is the Unlimited with an account of a picture, a play, and a romance, completed simultaneously; here is Nomad with an invitation for me to go a-fishing with him; here is Sinbad with a dissertation on Dover and a word on eccentric chucks; here is the Major wanting immediately a title for his latest novel; and here are Elsie and Sylvia, two pretty little laughing, frilled lasses who seem to be by no means frightened by being in the society of all these clever gentlemen. I own I like to have portraits of my friends, odd sketches, photographs of pleasant scenes expressly connected with one's own existence, round about the room, in preference to the regulation proof engraving from the print-sellers, in which you have no particular interest and which you are just as likely to meet with on the walls of Brown, Jones, or Robinson. And in the twilight it is pleasant enough to hold a sort of dreamy conversazione with your friends,

and to recall the reminiscences that special pictures awaken.

That one over the piano, which is now in the full glare of the firelight, is a case in point. And what a superb instrument does that broken-down crazy, wheezy "square," look at the present moment! How lovely is the richness of its dark mahogany, how golden its satinwood, and how mellow its ancient ivory! It looks fit, indeed, for some great composer to sit down to and let his hands wander gently over the keys in search of a "Firelight Sonata." It has, however, naught but a queer, querulous, old-fashioned tone about it now; it is perfectly in tune, and when well handled, it is wonderfully effective for some rare old *minuet* or *gavotte*.

A good many celebrated fingers have wandered over those keys at one time and another, and at this very moment a mingled melody—now sweet, now sad, now grave, now gay—seems to return and revel in the flickering firelight. It almost startles me with its reality and its distinctness.

Is it the merry gas-jet? Can it be a distant organ at the other side of the square? Is it the chimes at the church of Saint Nongleby? It may be the first, the second, or the last, or it may be all three combined.

Anyway I hear through all a succession of

melodies—vanished voices recalling the pictures of the past!

Ah! how one wanders on from one thing to another; how one gets a picture within a picture and a reminiscence within a reminiscence, as one ponders in the firelight; how people long forgotten come back in troops; how scenes long obliterated are suddenly revived with a distinctness, an elaboration of detail, and a reality that is positively astonishing! You live over again years of your life and read your own history as if it were written by an honest and uncompromising biographer.

Come back, out of the shadowy past, chronicles of "a day that is dead!" Come back, long-forgotten episodes that proved to be romances and nothing more! Come back, sad reminiscences of the "might have been." Return, brave, good, true, and trusty friends! Return, sweet voices that sang so blithely, eyes that flashed so brightly, and hearts that one thought to be true!

Come back, and haunt my room for awhile, and playfully linger in the flickering firelight! Come back, those days of love and trust! Come—

"Eh? What? Yes! Come in!"

"Six o'clock, sir; shall I light the gas? I've taken the hot water upstairs," says my servant.

Six o'clock! I certainly must not moon here any longer. I must go and dress at once. I quite forgot that the Unlimited and myself were to take an early dinner together at the Grampus Club and were going to see the first performance of a new piece at the theatre afterwards.

THE END.

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